



THE POETIC EDDA
A Dual-Language Edition
EDWARD PETTIT

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The *Poetic Edda*

A Dual-Language Edition

Edward Pettit

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In memoriam

Alan Paul Pettit

24 January 1918–15 May 1995

Hazell Macdonald Pettit

4 October 1923–16 March 2016

Robert Charles Pettit

20 June 1955–10 March 2011

kveld lífir maðr ekki eptir kvið Norna

Contents

Acknowledgements	ix
Signs and Abbreviations	xi
Introduction	1
Poems from the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda (Gammel kongelig Samling 2365 4^{to})	29
<i>Vøluspá</i> (Codex Regius)	31
<i>Hávamál</i>	73
<i>Vafþrúðnismál</i>	135
<i>Grímnismál</i>	165
<i>Før Skírnis</i>	207
<i>Hárbarðsljóð</i>	231
<i>Hymiskviða</i>	259
<i>Lokasenna</i>	283
<i>Prymskviða</i>	325
<i>Vølundarkviða</i>	341
<i>Alvíssmál</i>	365
<i>Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri</i>	385
<i>Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar</i>	409
<i>Helgakviða Hundingsbana ǫnnur</i>	433
<i>Frá dauða Sinfjötla</i>	457
<i>Grípisspá</i>	461
<i>Reginsmál</i>	479
<i>Fáfnismál</i>	495
<i>Sigrdrífumál</i>	519
<i>Brot af Sigurðarkviðu</i>	537
<i>Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta</i>	551

<i>Sigurðarkviða in skamma</i>	567
<i>Helreið Brynhildar</i>	595
<i>Dráp Niflunga</i>	605
<i>Guðrúnarkviða ǫnnur</i>	609
<i>Guðrúnarkviða in þriðja</i>	629
<i>Oddrúnargrátr</i>	639
<i>Atlakviða in grænlenzka</i>	657
<i>Atlamál in grænlenzku</i>	679
<i>Guðrúnarhvöt</i>	715
<i>Hamðismál</i>	727
Poems from Other Manuscripts	745
<i>Völuspá (Hauksbók)</i>	747
<i>Baldrs draumar</i>	771
<i>Rígsþula</i>	783
<i>Hyndluljóð</i>	805
<i>Svipdagsmál (Gróugaldr and Fjölsvinnsmál)</i>	831
Index	863

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I also thank the anonymous reviewers of an earlier version of this book for their comments. Among other things, they recommended that I take more account of the sensitivities of minority audiences—something I have endeavoured to do in the published edition.

On that topic, given the prejudiced misuse of Old Norse literature by various groups and individuals past and present, I condemn, and reject any association with, any use of this book to justify or promote discrimination, whether on grounds of race, skin colour (or other aspects of physical appearance), gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, nationality, religion, wealth or social status.

I bear sole responsibility, and apologize, for any shortcomings of design, questionable opinions, inconsistencies and outright errors that, despite my best efforts, persist in this book. I hope they do not greatly mar the enjoyment that it is intended to bring to a wide range of readers.

Edward Pettit
August 2022

Signs and Abbreviations

*	hypothetical or reconstructed word or name
acc.	accusative
corr.	corrected
dat.	dative
ed.	edited (by)
edn	edition
fem.	feminine
fol.	folio(s)
gen.	genitive
l(l).	line(s) (before a line number or numbers)
masc.	masculine
ME	Middle English
neut.	neuter
nom.	nominative
n.pl.	no place
OE	Old English
OHG	Old High German
ON	Old Norse
pl.	plural or plate(s)
pr.	prose (following a numbered stanza)
rpt.	reprint(ed)
sg.	singular
st.	stanza (before a stanza number), pl. stt.
v.l.	<i>varia lectio</i> ‘variant reading’
vol(s).	volume(s)

Manuscripts of Eddic Poetry

A	AM 748 I a 4 ^{to} , Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen, Denmark
F	<i>Flateyjarbók</i> , Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, Gammel kongelig Samling (GkS) 1005 fol., Reykjavík, Iceland
H	<i>Hauksbók</i> , Stofnun Árna Magnússonar AM 544 4 ^{to} , Reykjavík, Iceland
R	Codex Regius of the <i>Poetic Edda</i> , Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, Gammel kongelig Samling (GkS) 2365 4 ^{to} , Reykjavík, Iceland
W	<i>Codex Wormianus</i> , AM 242 fol., Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen, Denmark

Eddic Poems and Prose Passages

<i>Akv.</i>	<i>Atlakviða in grænlenzka</i>
<i>Alv.</i>	<i>Alvíssmál</i>
<i>Am.</i>	<i>Atlamál in grænlenzku</i>
<i>BDr.</i>	<i>Baldrs draumar</i>
<i>Br.</i>	<i>Brot af Sigurðarkviða</i>
<i>Dr.</i>	<i>Dráp Niflunga</i>
<i>Fj.</i>	<i>Fjólsvinnsmál</i>
<i>Fm.</i>	<i>Fafnismál</i>
<i>FSk.</i>	<i>Før Skírnis</i>
<i>Gðr. I</i>	<i>Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta</i>
<i>Gðr. II</i>	<i>Guðrúnarkviða ɔnnur</i>
<i>Gðr. III</i>	<i>Guðrúnarkviða in þriðja</i>
<i>Gg.</i>	<i>Gróugaldr</i>
<i>Ghv.</i>	<i>Guðrúnarhvöt</i>
<i>Grm.</i>	<i>Grímnismál</i>
<i>Grp.</i>	<i>Grípisspá</i>
<i>Háv.</i>	<i>Hávamál</i>
<i>Hdl.</i>	<i>Hyndluljóð</i>
<i>HH. I</i>	<i>Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri</i>
<i>HH. II</i>	<i>Helgakviða Hundingsbana ɔnnur</i>
<i>HHv.</i>	<i>Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar</i>
<i>Hlr.</i>	<i>Helreið Brynhildar</i>
<i>Hm.</i>	<i>Hamðismál</i>
<i>Hrbl.</i>	<i>Harbarðsljóð</i>
<i>Hrfn.</i>	<i>Hrafnagaldur Óðins</i>
<i>Hym.</i>	<i>Hymiskviða</i>
<i>Ls.</i>	<i>Lokasenna</i>
<i>Od.</i>	<i>Oddrúnargrátr</i>
<i>Rm.</i>	<i>Reginsmál</i>
<i>Rþ.</i>	<i>Rígsþula</i>
<i>Sd.</i>	<i>Sigrdrífumál</i>
<i>Sf.</i>	<i>Frá dauða Sinfjötla</i>
<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Sigurðarkviða in skamma</i>
<i>Vkv.</i>	<i>Völundarkviða</i>
<i>Vm.</i>	<i>Vafþrúðnismál</i>
<i>Vsp.</i>	<i>Völuspá</i> (stanza references are to the R text, unless indicated by H)
<i>Prk.</i>	<i>Prymskviða</i>

Other Primary Texts

- Eirm.* *Eiríksmál* ‘Words about Eiríkr’, an anonymous Old Norse poem dated c. 954. Cited by stanza number from *SPSMA I*, 1003–13.
- FSN* C. C. Rafn., ed., *Fornaldar sögur nordrlanda*, 3 vols. (Copenhagen: Popp, 1829–30), a collection of Old Norse ‘legendary sagas’. Quotations are slightly adapted; translations are mine.
- GD* *Gesta Danorum* ‘The Deeds/History of the Danes’, a twelfth-century Latin work by the Danish writer Saxo Grammaticus. Cited by book, or book, section and subsection, from K. Friis-Jensen, ed., and P. Fisher, trans., *Saxo Grammaticus: Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
- Hák.* *Hákonarmál* ‘Words about Hákon’, a tenth-century Old Norse poem attributed to the Norwegian Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson. Cited by stanza number from *SPSMA I*, 171–95.
- Hál.* *Háleygjatal* ‘Enumeration of the Háleygir (people of Hálogaland)’, an Old Norse skaldic poem, probably composed c. 985, by the Norwegian Eyvindr skáldapillir Finnsson. Cited by stanza number from *SPSMA I*, 195–213.
- Harkv.* *Haraldkvæði* ‘Poem about Haraldr’ (also known as *Hrafnsmál* ‘Words of the Raven’), composed in Old Norse c. 900 by the Norwegian Þorbjörn hornklofi. Cited by stanza number from *SPSMA I*, 91–117.
- Haust.* *Haustlǫng* ‘Autumn-Long’, an Old Norse skaldic poem by the late-ninth- or early-tenth-century Norwegian Þjóðólfr ór Hvini. Cited by stanza number from *SPSMA III*, 431–63.
- Húsdr.* *Húsdrápa* ‘House Poem’, an Old Norse skaldic composition by Úlfr Uggason, an inhabitant of Western Iceland c. 1000. Cited by stanza number from *SPSMA III*, 402–24.
- NK* G. Neckel and H. Kuhn, ed., *Edda: die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, Band I, *Text*, 5th edn (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1983); this is the basis of the electronic text available at <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcgs/germ/anord/edda/edda.htm>
- SnEGylf* *Gylfaginning* ‘The Beguiling of Gyrfi’, part of the Icelander Snorri Sturluson’s Old Norse *Prose Edda*, a work composed c. 1220–30. Cited by section and page number from A. Faulkes, ed., *Snorri Sturluson: Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, 2nd edn (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2005), <http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Edda-1.pdf>. Spelling and punctuation altered in places.
- SnEProl* *Prologue*, part of Snorri Sturluson’s Old Norse *Prose Edda*, a work composed c. 1220–30. Cited by section and page number from A. Faulkes, ed., *Snorri Sturluson: Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, 2nd edn (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2005), <http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Edda-1.pdf>
- SnESkáld* *Skáldskaparmál* ‘The Language of Poetry’, part of Snorri Sturluson’s Old Norse *Prose Edda*, a work composed c. 1220–30. Cited by section and page number from A. Faulkes, ed., *Snorri Sturluson: Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, 2 vols. (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998, corr. rpt. 2007), <http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Edda-2a.pdf> and <http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Edda-2b.pdf>. Spelling and punctuation altered in places.

- SnEUpp* Heimir Pálsson, ed., and A. Faulkes, trans., *Snorri Sturluson: The Uppsala Edda: DG 11 4th* (London: Short Run Press Limited, 2012), <http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Uppsala%20Edda.pdf>. Cited by section and page number.
- SPSMA* M. Clunies Ross, ed., *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, 8 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007–). Cited by volume and page number; see also <https://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk/m.php?p=skaldic>.
- VS* *Völsunga saga* ‘The Saga of the Völsungar’, an anonymous Old Norse narrative, mainly in prose, dating from the thirteenth century. Old Norse cited by chapter from R. G. Finch, ed. and trans., *Völsunga Saga: The Saga of the Völsungs* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), <http://vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Völsunga%20saga.pdf>

Academic Journals

- ANF* *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*
JEGP *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
SS *Scandinavian Studies*

*It is time to chant from the sage's seat,
at the spring of Urðr;
I saw and I was silent, I saw and I pondered;
I listened to the speech of men;
I heard them discuss runes; they weren't silent with counsels,
at Hávi's hall,
in Hávi's hall;
I heard it said thus . . .*

Introduction

This book is an edition of medieval Nordic poems, interspersed with short passages of prose, in their original Old Norse-Icelandic language,¹ together with facing-page translations into modern English. These texts treat north-western European mythological and heroic subjects, including the creation, destruction and rebirth of the world, the deeds of Norse deities such as Óðinn, Þórr and Loki (the first two now more familiar to English speakers as Odin and Thor), and the tragedy surrounding legendary humans such as Sigurðr, Brynhildr and Guðrún.²

Collectively, these anonymous works have come to be known as the *Poetic Edda* or the *Elder Edda*. This collection is closely connected with, but distinct from, the *Prose Edda* or *Younger Edda* (c. 1220–30)³ of the Icelander Snorri Sturluson, to which the term *edda* was first applied by the end of the thirteenth century.⁴ Snorri's euhemeristic work has three main parts, the first two of which, *Gylfaginning* 'The Beguiling of Gylfi' (*SnEGylf*) and *Skáldskaparmál* 'The Language of Poetry' (*SnESkáld*), draw on versions of poems of the *Poetic Edda*. The notes in this edition refer frequently to *SnEGylf* and *SnESkáld*, because, as prime sources for our understanding of Norse mythology, they offer valuable insights into the meanings of many of the poems of the *Poetic Edda*.⁵ These works, the *Poetic Edda* and many prose sagas are enduring testaments to the flowering of Icelandic literature in the thirteenth century.⁶

Most of the poems in this edition survive in a single, fragmentary manuscript—it is missing one gathering of sixteen leaves—dated c. 1270, from Iceland. It is a copy of an earlier, lost original. The surviving manuscript, which probably comes from the country's west or north, was, in 1643, in the possession of Brynjólfur Sveinsson, bishop of Skálholt, who, in 1662, sent it as a gift to the king of Denmark. It is traditionally called the Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda*, this 'Royal Codex' having long been kept in Copenhagen's Royal Library. Now, though, following its return to Iceland in 1971, the codex is officially Gammel kongelig Samling (GkS) 2365 4^{to} of the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies in Reykjavík. Henceforth in this edition it is referred to as **R**.⁷ Although the Edd(a)ic poems of **R** have each been edited and translated many times before, they have not previously all been published together in a single volume containing both new editions of the Old Norse texts and new facing-page English translations.⁸

Six of the poems also survive, in whole or part, in a related, fragmentary manuscript of the early fourteenth century, AM 748 I a 4^{to} of the Arnamagnæan

Institute in Copenhagen, Denmark (**A**).⁹ These poems are *Grímnismál* ‘The Sayings’¹⁰ of (or ‘about’)¹¹ *Grímnir* (*Grm.*), *Hymiskviða* ‘The Lay of Hymir’ (*Hym.*), *Før Skírnis* ‘Skírnir’s Journey’ (*FSk.*),¹² *Hárbarðsljóð* ‘The Song of Hárbarðr’ (*Hrbl.*), *Vafþrúðnismál* ‘The Sayings of Vafþrúðnir’ (*Vm.*) and *Völundarkviða* ‘The Lay of Völundr’ (*Vkv.*). In addition, this Icelandic manuscript preserves the only extant text of another Eddic poem, *Baldrs draumar* ‘Baldr’s Dreams’ (*BDr.*), which is also included in the present edition. A second version of *Völsuspá* ‘The Prophecy of the Seeress’ (*Vsp.*), the first and most admired poem in **R**, appears in the fourteenth-century AM 544 4^{to} (alias *Hauksbók* ‘Haukr’s Book’,¹³ and henceforth referenced as **H**); since it is substantially different from that of **R**, it appears separately in this edition.

Additionally, modern editors often append other poems, known only from other manuscripts, to those of **R**, **A** and **H**, because they similarly treat mythological and heroic subjects in ‘Eddic’ metres. Decisions vary about which of these poems to include. This edition includes three, for the second and third of which modern texts and translations may not be readily accessible to many English-speaking readers: *Rígsþula* ‘Rígr’s List’ (*Rþ.*), *Hyndluljóð* ‘The Song of Hyndla’ (*Hdl.*) and *Svipdagsmál* ‘The Lay of Svipdagr’, the latter comprising *Gróugaldr* ‘Gróa’s Incantation’ (*Gg.*) and *Fjölsvinnsmál* ‘The Sayings of Fjölvinnr’ (*Fj.*).¹⁴

It is uncertain where in the early North the poems of the *Poetic Edda* were composed. Many probably originated—as did many prose sagas—from Iceland, where the surviving manuscripts were created. Two of the heroic poems, *Atlakviða* ‘The Lay of Atli’ (*Akv.*) and *Atlamál* ‘The Sayings of Atli’ (*Am.*), claim to be Greenlandic, though the former is thought to be older than the Norse settlement of Greenland. Others may stem ultimately from Norway, Denmark, Sweden or areas of Anglo-Scandinavian England. German traditions inform some of the heroic texts. Undoubtedly, many of the myths and legends treated in the *Poetic Edda* were known, in some form, outside Iceland in the early medieval North.

Also uncertain are the poems’ original dates of composition,¹⁵ although these obviously must be at least as old as the earliest manuscripts in which the poems were written down.¹⁶ Many of the poems may well have existed, in one form or other, centuries earlier than the surviving thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts, having been composed during the Viking Age using oral techniques.¹⁷ This likelihood is indicated, for example, by carvings of scenes apparently depicting aspects of a version of *ragna rök* ‘Ragnarok’ (literally the ‘doom/fate/end of the ruling powers’), the Norse mythological apocalypse, on a tenth-century cross in a churchyard in Gosforth, Cumbria, England; these seem likely to have been inspired by Eddic poems such as *Vsp.*¹⁸ It can at least be said that, judging from references in earlier non-Eddic poetry and visual art, many of the stories told and characters described in these poems—some of which are explicitly called ‘old’ or ‘ancient’,¹⁹ and all of whose authors are, significantly, unnamed—would have been known earlier, in some form, to the Scandinavians often now called vikings.²⁰ The transmission process most likely

involved a mixture of memorization (in the main), recomposition with deliberate variation, interpolation and accretion, omission, and various forms of scribal alteration and error. This means that many of the poems probably changed to a greater or lesser extent through time and, therefore, that their fixed presentation in this edition may well be more or less unrepresentative of their prior forms.

The great uncertainty surrounding these poems extends still further, to how, why, by whom and for whom they were performed (assuming they were). However, it is immediately obvious that any audience must have been knowledgeable about the characters and events of Norse mythology and heroic legend. Encouraged especially by the alternating speakers of some poems, such as *FSk.* and *Lokasenna* ‘Loki’s Flying’ (*Ls.*), which are often accompanied by speech directions in the margins of **R**,²¹ some scholars detect indications of an early form, or forms, of drama in the contents of the *Poetic Edda*.²² It is certainly essential to emphasize that Eddic poems, like most medieval verse, were presumably originally intended for some form of recitation—which is to say *performance*—by one or more persons to an audience familiar with oral traditions, rather than for lone, silent reading from parchment. One scholar has observed that ‘static printed versions of the eddic poems are about as close to the nature of the “living” works as they were conceived by the “original” poets and performers as sheet music is to a performed symphony at the Last Night of the Proms in London’s Royal Albert Hall’,²³ and, more starkly, ‘the book and the original eddic poem are worlds apart’.²⁴

However it was performed, Eddic poetry was composed in two main metres, both stanzaic, stress-based and structurally alliterative.²⁵ They are called *fornyrðislag* ‘old story metre’ and *ljóðaháttir* ‘metre of songs’.

Fornyrðislag normally comprises four four-stress ‘long lines’, each divided into two ‘half-lines’ which are linked by alliteration across a notional caesura.²⁶ This metre was used mostly for narrative verse; it appears in *Vsp.*, for example.

Ljóðaháttir comprises two conjoined sets of the following: a ‘long line’ followed by a ‘full verse’ distinctive as a metrical entity for containing between two and four alliterating syllables. This metre was used mainly for dialogue- or wisdom-verse, as seen, for example, in *Ls.*

A less common, extended form of *ljóðaháttir*, called *galdralag* ‘metre of incantations’, is associated with verbal magic. It features one or more additional full verses, as, for example, in *Ls.* 62.²⁷

A fourth Eddic metre, *málaháttir* ‘metre of speeches’, features half-lines characterized by having at least five metrical positions or syllables, as seen, most prominently, in *Am.*

Modern scholars often broadly distinguish poetry in these Eddic metres from what they call ‘skaldic’ verse.²⁸ The latter term denotes the kinds of exacting poetic form, used from the late ninth century, by the court poets (‘skalds’; ON *skáld*) of Norwegian kings, but also later adopted by poets in Iceland and other Norse-speaking areas. The court poets composed frequently encomiastic verse in a complex eight-line *dróttkvætt*

'court metre', which, although probably a development from *fornyrðislag*, imposed, unlike Eddic prosody, extremely demanding requirements for alliteration, syllable count and rhyme, and often featured complex, fractured syntax.²⁹ That these poets, who, unlike Eddic poets, are usually named, often used complex 'kennings'—abstruse periphrases involving two or more nouns—increases the difficulty of interpreting their verses. The distinction between 'Eddic' and 'skaldic' verse (and possibly poets) is, however, far from absolute—Eddic poems also contain kennings, for example, albeit usually comparatively simple ones,³⁰ and some seem to have been influenced by skaldic verse. Nevertheless, whereas the meaning of skaldic poetry is typically rather, and sometimes very, opaque, Eddic poetry is, by contrast, usually fairly transparent. Also, whereas skaldic verse normally deals with the contemporary and immediate, the older, Eddic verse forms generally address the past and distant.

The poems of R, which form the primary basis for this edition, fall into two main groups according to subject matter. First come what scholars traditionally classify as 'mythological' poems about the Norse gods. Second, starting with a large rubricated capital Á on fol. 20r, come 'heroic' poems about legendary humans. However, this is another blurred distinction,³¹ given firstly that gods sometimes appear in poems principally about humans, and vice versa, and secondly that a medieval Christian audience might well have interpreted the former group euhemeristically—that is, they may have viewed the gods and their actions as having originated in historical personages and events.

Below I give very brief summaries of the events of each poem.³² Readers who wish to avoid spoilers of the poems' contents may therefore wish to skip much of the rest of this Introduction.

The first, mythological group comprises the poems from *Vsp.* to *Alvíssmál* 'The Sayings of Alvíss' (*Alv.*).³³ These concern Norse deities such as Óðinn, Þórr, Freyr, Freyja and Loki, along with an elven smith called Völundr, monsters such as the wolf Fenrir and Miðgarðsormr ('Snake of Miðgarðr', Miðgarðr being a mythological place-name often anglicized as 'Midgard'), various formidable giants and a knowledgeable but unwary dwarf called Alvíss.³⁴

In this group, the first four poems feature the god Óðinn prominently. *Vsp.* is spoken by a seeress, who, in response to a request by Óðinn, tells of the world's creation, events leading to its destruction, the apocalypse of Ragnarok itself, and the world's subsequent rebirth from the sea. This poem is the highlight of the collection in terms of scope and poetic accomplishment. It is considered one of the treasures of early Northern literature.

Hávamál 'The Sayings of Hávi (an alias of Óðinn)' (*Háv.*), the longest poem in the collection, is an altogether different and obviously composite work, but still another highlight. It offers a memorable blend of, on the one hand, commonsense, practical wisdom about how a man should act in order to survive in a harsh world and, on the other, glimpses of the doings—both sublime and ridiculous—of Óðinn. His deeds

include the acquisition of the mead of poetry from the giants and, while hanging from a tree as a sacrifice to himself, his learning of runes.

In *Vm.*, Óðinn, against the wishes of his wife, Frigg, engages (apparently incognito) in a deadly contest of knowledge with the eponymous giant Vafþrúðnir. Ultimately, the giant is found wanting.

Grm. sees Óðinn again in dispute with his wife, an argument which results in his capture by a certain Geirrøðr, who tortures the disguised god between two fires. As he suffers, Óðinn, who calls himself *Grímnir* 'Masked One', reveals divine wisdom to Geirrøðr's son, Agnarr, who has refreshed him with a drink. Ultimately, Óðinn reveals his true identity to Geirrøðr, who promptly slips and impales himself on his sword, leaving Agnarr to rule the kingdom.

In *FSk.* the focus shifts temporarily from Óðinn to the god Freyr. He has fallen deeply in love with a radiant giantess called Gerðr, whom he saw from afar. Freyr's servant, Skírnir, undertakes to travel to giantland to acquire Gerðr for his lord, a task in which he eventually succeeds, though only by threatening the resistant giantess with rune-magic.

Hrl. is another antagonistic dialogue involving Óðinn. This time, however, his disputant is the mighty Pórr, who requests passage across a stretch of water from a ferryman on the other side. Unknown to Pórr, the ferryman, who calls himself *Hárbarðr* 'Grey Beard', is Óðinn in disguise. Hárbarðr refuses Pórr passage and has the last word in their verbal duel, leaving his opponent to take the long road home by foot. This is the first of four consecutive poems to feature Pórr more or less prominently.

In *Hym.*, Pórr goes fishing with the giant Hymir, only to hook Miðgarðsormr, the world-encircling snake, which he strikes on the head with his hammer, Mjöllnir. Back at the giant's home, Pórr makes off with a huge cauldron in which the sea-giant, Ægir, was to brew ale for all the gods. Hymir and his giant companions pursue Pórr, who promptly slays them all.

Ls. is set in Ægir's home, where he had brewed ale and arranged a feast to which many of the gods came. At the feast Loki accuses each of the gods of disreputable behaviour, before finally being driven away by Pórr. A concluding prose passage describes how the gods punished Loki, according to other sources for his part in the slaying of the innocent god Baldr.

With *Prymskviða* 'The Lay of Prymr' (*Prk.*), the collection's tone lightens with burlesque comedy. Pórr's hammer has been stolen by the giant Prymr, who demands the beautiful goddess Freyja in exchange for its return. Pórr sets out for the land of giants disguised as Freyja in bridalwear, with Loki as handmaiden. The poem's climax is no less entertaining for being predictably violent.

Vkv. concerns the capture and hamstringing of an elven smith by a Swedish king called Níðuðr. It culminates in the captive's savage vengeance and marvellous airborne escape.

Alv. is another dialogue-poem, this time between Þórr and the eponymous dwarf Alvíss ‘All-Wise’. The dwarf has come to take home a bride, but most unwisely without asking the permission of Þórr, who claims to be the only god with the right to give her away. Surprisingly, instead of simply smashing the dwarf’s skull, Þórr keeps Alvíss talking above ground until dawn, when, we may infer, the first rays of the sun destroy him, probably by petrification.

The second, heroic group of poems in R runs from *Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri* ‘The Earlier Lay of Helgi Hundingsbani’ (HH. I) to *Hamðismál* ‘The Lay of Hamðir’ (Hm.), all of which survive only in this manuscript. These poems mainly concern legendary human beings, although some also refer to gods, other supernatural beings and mythological events such as Ragnarok.³⁵ Together, with the exception of *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* ‘The Lay of Helgi Hjörvarðsson’ (HHv.), they comprise the Eddic Völsung-Niflung cycle. This series of poems takes its name partly from the character *Völsungr* (whose descendants are *Völsungar*) and partly from the etymologically obscure Old Norse term (*H*)*niflungar* for members of the ancient Burgundian royalty.

Some of the characters in these poems have vestigial links to correspondingly named, but shadowy, historical figures of the Germanic past from the fourth to seventh centuries. Most notably, *Gunnarr*, *Atli* and *Jormunrekkr* are reflexes of, respectively, a fifth-century Burgundian king called *Gundaharius*, *Attila* the Hun (d. 453) and an Ostrogothic king called *Ermaneric* who died in the 370s. The imperious figure of the valkyrie *Brynhildr* possibly stems from a Visigothic princess called *Brunchildis* (d. 613) who married a Frankish king named *Sigibert* (d. 575; cf. *Sigurðr*).³⁶ Additionally, *Þjóðrekkr*, who plays a minor part in this cycle, probably stems from the Ostrogothic King *Theodoric the Great* (454–526).

Other, often substantially different, accounts of events recounted in these heroic poems appear in other major medieval Germanic compositions. These are the Old English poem *Beowulf* (c. 700?);³⁷ the Middle High German poem the *Nibelungenlied* ‘The Lay of the Nibelungs’ (c. 1200), which exists in multiple versions, and an associated poem called *Die Klage* ‘The Lament’;³⁸ the mid-thirteenth-century Norse (probably Norwegian) *Þiðreks saga af Bern* ‘Saga of Þiðrekr of Bern (Verona)’,³⁹ which draws on German traditions; and the thirteenth-century Icelandic *Völsunga saga* ‘Saga of the Völsungar’ (VS), for which Eddic poems were a major source.⁴⁰ Furthermore, scenes from the cycle are frequently depicted in early medieval art from Scandinavia and England.⁴¹ There are also Scandinavian ballads, as well as a continuing tradition of Faroese balladry.⁴²

Additionally, heroic (and mythological) Eddic poems, along with Snorri’s *Prose Edda*, were fundamental sources for Richard Wagner’s nineteenth-century cycle of music dramas, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.⁴³ They were also major influences on J. R. R. Tolkien, twentieth-century author of *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*,⁴⁴ and George R. R. Martin, author of the recent series of novels collectively called *A Song of Ice and Fire*.⁴⁵

VS, which draws heavily on versions of many of the heroic poems in R,⁴⁶ is a valuable guide to these poems' interpretation, although readers will find inconsistencies of narrative and characterization between their accounts of events. This is the case even within R, as, although some of its poems might have been adapted to suit the purposes of the unknown compiler of this collection, they (unlike at least some of the prose passages and possibly Grp.) should not be imagined to have been composed for this collection, let alone in sequence for it. Each poem should be appreciated principally on its own terms, as a separate work.

R's heroic texts begin with three poems about warriors called *Helgi* 'Holy One'. The first poem, now customarily known as *Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri*, is actually headed *Völsungakviða* 'Poem of the Völsungar' in R. It begins with a vivid description of auspicious events at the birth of the eponymous hero, who goes on to slay a king called Hundingr and his vengeful sons. Subsequently, Helgi wins the hand of the valkyrie Sigrún by killing Höðbroddr, a king to whom she had been betrothed unwillingly.

The first part of the next poem, HHv.—a text named after an ostensibly different Helgi—concerns a king called Hjörvarðr and his efforts to win the hand of the beautiful Sigrlinn, which, thanks to an earl called Atli (distinct from Atli/Attila the Hun), eventually succeed. The pair have a son, whom a valkyrie names *Helgi*. With Atli's help, Helgi avenges his maternal grandfather and kills a giant. A flyting between the giant's daughter and Atli ensues, which ends when Helgi tells the giantess to look east—the first rays of morning, we understand, petrify her. Subsequently, Helgi is betrothed to Sváva, a valkyrie whom his brother, Heðinn, having been cursed by a troll-woman, swears to marry—an oath he immediately regrets bitterly. Helgi forgives him as he expects to die shortly in a duel. He does, indeed, receive a mortal wound, and requests that Sváva love Heðinn, who sets out to avenge his brother.

Helgakviða Hundingsbana 2nnur 'The Second Lay of Helgi Hundingsbani' (HH. II) begins by describing how Helgi Hundingsbani (the hero of HH. I) secretly visited the court of Hundingr, who then sought him. Helgi, however, escapes Hundingr's men by dressing up as a serving-maid. He goes on to kill Hundingr and win Sigrún by killing Höðbroddr, but is himself killed by Sigrún's brother. Subsequently, the dead Helgi is seen riding to his burial-mound. Sigrún enters the mound, too, and falls asleep in his arms. Finally, Sigrún dies from grief, but she and Helgi are said to have been reborn.

A prose passage headed *Frá dauða Sinfjötla* 'About the death of Sinfjötli' introduces the sons of Sigmundr, son of Völsungr. Of these, the youngest, Sigurðr—the half-brother of Helgi Hundingsbani—became the foremost hero of medieval Germanic tradition and the basis for Wagner's Siegfried.

Grípisspá 'The Prophecy of Grípir' (Grp.) summarizes, in rather uninspired fashion, the events of Sigurðr's life, which subsequent poems in R treat more rewardingly. Sigurðr learns from his maternal uncle, Grípir, that, among other things, he will slay his foster-father, Reginn, and the dragon Fáfnir, and that he will take that monster's treasure. He will fall in love with, and become betrothed to, the valkyrie Brynhildr,

but subsequently forget her (under malign magical influence). He will exchange appearances with Gunnarr, son of Gjúki, and sleep (without sexual intercourse) beside Brynhildr in Gunnarr's form, thus binding Gunnarr and Brynhildr to each other. He himself will marry Guðrún, Gunnarr's sister, while Gunnarr will marry Brynhildr. Ultimately, Brynhildr, aggrieved by this shape-changing trickery, will incite Guðrún's brothers to murder Sigurðr.

Reginsmál 'The Sayings of Reginn' (*Rm.*), introduces Sigurðr's foster-father, Reginn, son of Hreiðmarr. He tells Sigurðr how Loki killed Reginn's brother, Otr, and subsequently took gold from a dwarf, who cursed it. Loki used the gold to pay compensation for Otr, but Hreiðmarr withheld it from both Reginn and his surviving brother, Fáfnir. Consequently, Fáfnir slew his father and took all the gold for himself. The text goes on to record how Sigurðr avenged his father by killing the sons of Hundingr, and how Reginn incited Sigurðr to kill Fáfnir, who had become a monstrous snake hoarding the gold.

In *Fáfnismál* 'The Sayings of Fáfnir' (*Fm.*) Sigurðr stabs Fáfnir, but before Fáfnir dies, the two converse. During their discourse, the snake speaks, among other things, of Sigurðr's demise, warns him about Reginn and reveals mythological lore, including details of Ragnarok. Subsequently, Sigurðr cooks Fáfnir's heart. In doing so, he burns his thumb and puts it in his mouth, whereupon he understands the language of nearby nuthatches, which advise him, among other things, to eat Fáfnir's heart himself, kill Reginn and keep the gold—which he does.

Sigrdrífumál 'The Sayings of Sigrdrífa' (*Sd.*) centres on the runes and advice imparted to Sigurðr by the eponymous valkyrie (*Sigrdrífa* 'Victory Driver', or perhaps 'Victory Snowdrift' [i.e., 'Battle'], seems to be another name for, and perhaps was once an appellative of, Brynhildr), after he awakened her from a sleep induced magically by Óðinn as punishment for disobedience. This poem is incomplete in **R**, due to the 'great lacuna': the loss from **R** of what is thought to be eight leaves—room for about 260 stanzas, although some prose may well have been included—which contained the end of *Sd.* Fortunately, the missing stanzas of *Sd.* are recoverable mainly from paper manuscripts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the full text having apparently been copied before the loss occurred.

The missing leaves presumably also contained the first part (perhaps roughly half) of **R**'s *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu* 'Fragment of a Lay of Sigurðr' (*Br.*). What else they contained, between the end of *Sd.* and the start of *Br.* is uncertain, but *VS*, which draws heavily on poems of the *Poetic Edda*, probably supplies a few of the doubtless many missing stanzas from **R** from a poem (or poems) about Sigurðr and related characters, as well as a likely guide to its (or their) basic story. Largely on this basis, scholars have argued for the former presence in **R** of a 'Falcon Lay', a 'Dream Lay' and/or **Sigurðarkviða in meira* 'The Longer Lay of Sigurðr'.⁴⁷

What remains of *Br.* includes discussion between Gunnarr and his brother Högni (probably) about the killing of Sigurðr. The conflicting responses of Brynhildr and

Guðrún to Sigurðr's death are also recorded, as are Brynhildr's foreboding words to Gunnarr. A concluding prose passage describes differing accounts of Sigurðr's death, thus testifying to the varied, fluid nature of Northern heroic legend.

Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsa 'The First Lay of Guðrún' (*Gðr. I*) describes Guðrún's pent-up grief at Sigurðr's death, which a succession of visitors attempt to release. The third of these, Guðrún's sister Gullrǫnd, succeeds by exposing his corpse. Guðrún then praises her dead husband and condemns his murderers. Brynhildr curses Gullrǫnd, and, to defend herself against Gullrǫnd's consequent verbal attack, blames her own brother, Atli (Attila the Hun), for all the evil that has been done. A concluding prose passage records that Guðrún went away to Denmark, and that Brynhildr committed suicide because she did not want to live after Sigurðr.

Sigurðarkviða in skamma 'The Short Lay of Sigurðr' (*Sg.*) begins with a brief account of Sigurðr's swearing of oaths with Gunnarr and Högni, his betrothal to Guðrún, and his deception of Brynhildr on behalf of Gunnarr. Next comes a description of Brynhildr's icy distress at this deception, and her determination to leave Gunnarr unless he kills Sigurðr. A disturbed Gunnarr consults Högni and decides to request that his third brother, Guthormr, do the killing, since Guthormr had not sworn oaths to Sigurðr. Guthormr does so. The rest of the poem includes the dying Sigurðr's words to Guðrún, but focuses on the response of Brynhildr, which includes prophecies of doom and a cool determinedness to commit suicide, for which she details elaborate preparations. The poem, which is more about Brynhildr than Sigurðr, ends with her final words in life.

Helreið Brynhildar 'Brynhildr's Hel-Ride' (*Hlr.*) describes the dead Brynhildr's words to a hostile giantess whom she met while riding to Hel, land of the dead. Brynhildr recounts key aspects of her life, including details of her disobedience to Óðinn.

Dráp Niflunga 'The Slaying of the Niflungar' (*Dr.*) is a short prose passage describing how Guðrún was married to Atli, Brynhildr's brother, and how he killed Gunnarr and Högni, whom he blamed for his sister's death. Högni's heart was torn out and Gunnarr was killed by an adder in a snake-pit. Subsequent poems in R also treat these events.

In *Guðrúnarkviða gnnur* 'The Second Lay of Guðrún' (*Gðr. II*) Guðrún reflects sorrowfully on Sigurðr's murder and the responses of Gunnarr and Högni. She records how she then went to Denmark, where her mother, Grímsmildr, requested that Gunnarr and Högni recompense Guðrún for the killing of her husband and son. After bringing Guðrún a magical drink intended to make her forget Sigurðr, Grímsmildr eventually succeeded—the drink's effect perhaps having been delayed—in persuading Guðrún to accept Atli in marriage, though not before Guðrún prophesied that he would kill her brothers and that she would kill him. Guðrún then describes her journey to Atli's home, and concludes with her account of how she gave Atli reassuring—though, to us, evidently misleading—interpretations of his violent dreams.

In *Guðrúnarkviða in þriðja* 'The Third Lay of Guðrún' (*Gðr. III*) Guðrún, now married to Atli, is accused by one of his handmaidens of having slept with King Þjóðrekr, but

Guðrún says the pair merely embraced once. She calls for her brothers, who may, however, already be dead. Forced to undergo ordeal by boiling water, Guðrún proves her innocence—unlike the accusing handmaiden, who is led away to be drowned in a bog.

Oddrúnargrátr ‘Oddrún’s Lament’ (*Od.*) tells of a woman called Borgný who, though long in labour, cannot give birth. Oddrún, Atli’s sister, visits her and recites incantations which enable her to bear a boy and a girl. Oddrún explains that she helped in fulfilment of a promise (obscure to us). She goes on to tell of her past, in which her dying father had commanded that she be married to Gunnarr, something to which Atli was implacably opposed because of the trickery which had led to the death of his other sister, Brynhildr. After discovering that Oddrún and Gunnarr had shared a bed, Atli had his men cut out Högni’s heart and throw Gunnarr into a snake-pit. Oddrún sailed to save Gunnarr, but arrived too late to prevent Atli’s ophidian mother biting his heart. Oddrún wonders how she continues to live after Gunnarr.

Akv., in full *Atlakviða in grænlenzka* ‘The Greenlandic Lay of Atli’, is one of the best and probably oldest poems in **R**; it perhaps dates from the ninth century, but appears to include some folk-tradition stemming ultimately from the fifth. It tells how Gunnarr and Högni accepted Atli’s invitation to visit him, despite a warning from their sister, Guðrún, now Atli’s wife.⁴⁸ Gunnarr is taken captive and Atli has Högni’s heart cut out, a mistake which ensures that the whereabouts of Gunnarr’s treasure (taken from Sigurðr) are now known to Gunnarr alone. Gunnarr is placed in a snake-pit, where he dies. Guðrún takes revenge by feeding Atli his own sons, stabbing him to death, and incinerating his hall, along with everyone inside.

Am., in full *Atlamál in grænlenzku* ‘The Greenlandic Sayings/Poem of Atli’, tells a version of the same events, but at considerably greater length—it is the second-longest poem in **R**—and with many differences of detail. Not least of these is an alternative demise for Atli, whom Guðrún does not burn within his hall but lays to rest in a ship-burial. This poem is especially notable for its use of *málaháttir*.

A prose passage preceding *Guðrúnarhvöt* ‘Guðrún’s Whetting’ (*Ghv.*) describes how Guðrún, having failed to commit suicide after killing Atli, drifted over the sea to the land of King Jónakr, who married her. They had three sons: Sørli, Erpr and Hamðir (the inclusion of Erpr in this list contradicts the next poem, *Hm.*). Also raised there was Guðrún’s daughter by Sigurðr, Svanhildr, who married King Jórmunrekkr. She reportedly had an affair with the king’s son, Randvér, for which Jórmunrekkr had him hanged and her trodden to death by horses. *Ghv.* records Guðrún’s recollection of her sorrows and incitement of her sons to avenge their sister. This poem also draws on folk-tradition stemming from apparently historical events of the fourth century.

Hm. concludes **R**’s heroic cycle on a savage high. In this poem, which **R** identifies as ‘ancient’ and may indeed be among the collection’s oldest compositions, Guðrún goads Sørli and Hamðir into undertaking to avenge Svanhildr. Along the way, the pair foolishly insult and kill Erpr, who here is only their half-brother. In Jórmunrekkr’s hall

they sever the king's arms and legs, but not his head, thus unwisely enabling him to command that they be stoned, since iron weapons would not harm them. As a result, they fall valiantly.

Finally, we come to the poems outside **R** that, in addition to **H**'s version of *Vsp.*, are included in this edition.

BDr., from **A**, records how Óðinn, in an attempt to explain why his son Baldr was having bad dreams, rode to Hel. There, once past an aggressive hellhound, Óðinn—incognito as so often—raises a seeress from the grave and asks her for whom the hall of Hel is prepared. She replies that it is for Baldr, and gives associated details, before, having identified her questioner as Óðinn, reminding him of the impending doom of Ragnarok.

Rþ. is an incomplete poem from *Codex Wormianus* (AM 242 fol.), a fourteenth-century manuscript which also includes a text of the *Prose Edda*.⁴⁹ According to a brief prose introduction, the poem tells of how the god Heimdallr went travelling as *Rígr* 'King'. At each of three households of ascending social standing, he fathers a child representative of the corresponding class of people—slaves, freemen and nobles—each of which goes on to have offspring of the same class. The offspring of the third union, *Jarl* 'Earl', receives instruction from *Rígr* (whose name he also comes to bear) and goes on to have twelve sons, the youngest of whom, *Konr ungr* 'Young Konr' (a pun on ON *konungr* 'king'), himself gains the title of *Rígr*. Although the end of the poem is lost, he presumably became a model king.

Hdl. survives complete in the late-fourteenth-century Icelandic *Flateyjarbók* 'Book of Flatey'.⁵⁰ It records a tense dialogue between the goddess Freyja and a giantess called Hyndla, whom Freyja awakens at the dead of night. Hyndla refuses to ride with Freyja, so the two converse on the spot about the lineage of a man called Óttarr, whom Freyja is riding in the form of a boar. Hyndla recounts his illustrious lineage, and the dialogue ends acrimoniously (though rather obscurely) with insulting words and fire.

Svipdagsmál is the modern title for two separate poems, *Gg.* and *Fj.*, which appear to be narratively linked and are found in numerous seventeenth-century manuscripts. In *Gg.*, the hero, Svipdagr, having been set the 'impossible' task of visiting a woman called Mengloð, visits the grave of his mother, Gróa. She awakens and recites to him nine helpful incantations. *Fj.*, which includes much obscure mythological lore, tells of how Svipdagr accomplished this task.

This edition of the *Poetic Edda* is intended mainly for beginning students of Old Norse, students of other medieval Germanic literatures, and interested academics in other fields, rather than advanced students and scholars of Old Norse. I hope, however, that all those interested in ancient Northern myth and legend may derive some value from the publication of original texts and modern translations of these poems, along with commentary, in a single, easily accessible volume aimed at English-speaking readers.

Some may wish that my commentary were more detailed. Much more could undoubtedly be said, but my wish to contain the poems within a single set of covers

has necessitated brevity, sometimes silence.⁵¹ My remarks attempt to furnish readers with enough information to understand and appreciate the poems as literature, but those who have prior familiarity with at least the basics of Old Norse mythology and heroic legend will undoubtedly enjoy them more. Such knowledge can be gained, for mythology, by consulting the works (listed in the Further Reading section below) by Gabriel Turville-Petre, Rudolf Simek, H. R. E. Davidson and Christopher Abram; and, for the heroic Völsung-Niflung cycle, those by Theodore Andersson, Francis G. Gentry *et al.*, and Edward R. Haymes and Susann T. Samples.⁵² Readers who want more detailed commentary will find further information in the works listed in the Further Reading sections to each poem; these listings, though not always especially short, are nevertheless highly selective, being limited mainly to works in English in order to avoid inaccessibility to most of this book's intended audience. Serious students should consult the multivolume *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda* by Klaus von See *et al.*,⁵³ for its commentaries, texts, translations and bibliographies, as well as the modern Icelandic edition of Eddic poems by Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason in the *Íslensk fornrit* series. Readers wishing to understand and appreciate the poems in their original language will, having learnt the basics of Old Norse grammar and pronunciation,⁵⁴ find invaluable the *Glossary to the Poetic Edda* by Beatrice La Farge and John Tucker.⁵⁵

With two exceptions, the Old Norse texts in this edition derive from my examination of photographic facsimiles of the original manuscripts, supplemented by consultation of major prior editions.⁵⁶ This edition is based primarily on **R** whenever it is a source for a poem. The order of poems follows **R** from *Vsp.* to *Hm.* Appended are the **H** text of *Vsp.*, followed by *BDr.*, *Rp.*, *Hdl.* and *Svipdagsmál* (*Gg.* and *Fj.*), which survive only in other manuscripts. Where readings for poems attested in **R** are taken from **A**, **H** or elsewhere, this is noted in the textual apparatus, which also records manuscript readings when these have been emended in the text; only select variants (normally excluding orthographical differences) are recorded therein. Emendations are also indicated by italics within the Old Norse texts facing the English translations (not elsewhere). This convention extends to titles, which are italicized within the Old Norse texts when they do not appear in the manuscript on which the edition is primarily based—some titles are post-medieval (see also the textual apparatus). By contrast, italics in the translations denote emphasis or untranslated Old Norse words; elsewhere, italics simply distinguish Old Norse from modern English. Manuscript abbreviations are silently expanded within the Old Norse texts, but the larger or more unusual ones are noted in the textual apparatus.⁵⁷ In keeping with the usual practice for reading editions of Old Norse texts, the spelling of the manuscripts has been largely normalized (although not to the farthest extent possible), except in the manuscript readings recorded in the textual apparatus (although even these are somewhat normalized due to typographical limitations).⁵⁸

Punctuation is supplied editorially to assist comprehension, at the risk of occasional disambiguation or more serious misinterpretation. In particular, the placement of quotation marks to indicate a person's speech may sometimes be questioned, as it is not always clear who is speaking a particular stanza or stanzas. I have put framing quotation marks around poems which have an explicit first-person speaker, with the exception of *Háv.*, a composite poem in which the speaker attribution is especially unclear. Also wholly editorial is the stanza numbering, which sometimes differs from that of earlier editions of these poems, often due to differences of opinion about where some stanzas end and others begin, or about their correct order.⁵⁹ The centralized presentation of the Old Norse poetry on the page has no basis in the manuscripts, in which both poetry and prose are presented as 'prose', but merely reflects my desire to present a visually attractive edition that encourages appreciation of at least the poetry as works of art.

My translations endeavour to reflect both the meaning and at least something of the poetic spirit of the Old Norse originals in simple, unarchaic English verse. To try to convey meaning without spirit—even if these attributes *could* be dissociated—in verse form would be to do a disservice both to the Old Norse poets and to modern readers unable to read the texts in the original language. Accordingly, I have tried to reflect something of the original's character by giving the translation a lightly alliterative flavour, although the overriding importance (in my view) of fidelity to the meaning of the Old Norse has often thwarted this ambition; in such cases, a degree of euphony was aspired to, but again not always attained. My attempt to reflect the meaning of the original words is itself often undermined by the inherent ambiguity of poetry and by cases in which modern English simply has no equivalent for an Old Norse term.⁶⁰ I have not attempted to recast the Old Norse verse forms into English equivalents. Nor have I adhered especially closely to the order of the Old Norse words, as to do so would often prevent fluent translation.

I translate most of the poems' Old Norse proper nouns in the notes (often only on their first appearance in the collection), because these may contain clues to the nature of their bearers and the events in which they participate, though many are etymological senses, not immediately appreciable meanings.⁶¹ Suggestions for alternative translations of proper names and of other words and phrases are selective.

Readers may wish to compare my translations of the poems in this book with other English renderings, of which there are many.⁶²

Further Reading

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Notes to the Translation

- 1 Henceforth I refer to this language, and to works composed in it, as ‘Old Norse’.
- 2 The Old Norse letters *þ* and *ð* (the corresponding capitals for which are *P* and *D*) can be roughly equated with ‘th’ and ‘d’ in modern English; hence *Pórr* is often anglicized as *Thor* and *Óðinn* as *Odin*. Among the other letters likely to be unfamiliar to newcomers to Old Norse, the most off-putting is probably *ȝ*, which, however, may simply be pronounced approximately like the ‘o’ in English ‘not’. My translation presents all proper nouns in their Old Norse nominative form, to which an English possessive ending may be appended (thus *Pórr’s* and *Óðinn’s*); so too does my commentary, except where other inflected forms occur in quoted passages of Old Norse.
- 3 Unless otherwise stated, all dates in this book are *anno Domini*.
- 4 The meaning of *edda* is uncertain. It might mean ‘art of poetry’ or ‘edition (of poetry)’, being a coinage from the Latin verb *edo* ‘I publish, tell’, perhaps with a nod to an Old Norse homonym meaning ‘great-grandmother’—it may not be irrelevant that some of these poems feature prominent female speakers, including, in the first instance, a preternaturally ancient seeress. An alternative suggestion is that *edda* means ‘little eider duck’, as some medieval Icelandic manuscripts were named after birds. See A. Faulkes, ‘Edda’, *Gripla* 2 (1997), 32–39, revised at <http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Edda.pdf> (all Web links in this edition were last accessed on 18 May 2022); A. Liberman, ‘The Origin of the Name *Edda*’, in his *In Prayer and Laughter: Essays on Medieval Scandinavian and Germanic Mythology, Literature, and Culture* (Moscow: Paleograph Press, 2016), pp. 395–405.
- 5 References are to the editions by A. Faulkes (see ‘Other Primary Texts’ in the list of abbreviations and the Further Reading section at the end of this introduction). For a full translation, see A. Faulkes, trans., *Snorri Sturluson: ‘Edda’* (London: J. M. Dent, 1987), <http://vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/EDDArestr.pdf>; alternatively, for the *Prologue*, *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, there is J. L. Byock, trans., *Snorri Sturluson: The Prose Edda: Norse Mythology* (London: Penguin, 2005).
- 6 The most famous of the sagas are the ‘family sagas’ or ‘sagas of Icelanders’, editions of which are available in the Íslenzk fornrit series published by Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, Reykjavík. They are translated together in Viðar Hreinsson, ed., *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders including 49 Tales*, 5 vols. (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997). For valuable analysis and synopses, see T. M. Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967).
- 7 For a facsimile with transcription, on which this edition relies heavily, see Vésteinn Ólason and Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, *Konungsbók Eddukvæða. Codex Regius. GL. KGL. SML. 2365 4to* (Reykjavík: Lögberg Edda, 2001); it is referred to as ‘the facsimile volume’ in the textual apparatus of this edition. For online photographs, see ‘GKS 2365 4^{to}’, *handrit.is*, <https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/is/GKS04-2365>
- 8 The main modern editions of the *Poetic Edda*, which all advanced students should consult, are G. Neckel and H. Kuhn, ed., *Edda: die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, Band I, *Text*, 5th edn. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1983) (NK), and Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, ed., *Eddukvæði, Íslenzk fornrit*, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Hið

íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 2014); neither contains a translation. A valuable, but incomplete, modern edition with facing-page English translation and extensive commentary, is U. Dronke, ed. and trans., *The Poetic Edda*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969–2011). One recent edition includes facing-page English translations but only from three scholars of the first half of the twentieth century: J. Knife, ed., *The Poetic Edda: Parallel Old Norse / English Edition* (Amazon Kindle e-book, 2017). O. Bray, ed. and trans., *The Elder or Poetic Edda, Commonly Known as Sæmund's Edda* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1908) lacks the heroic poems. Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, ed. and trans., *Corpus Poeticum Boreale: The Poetry of the Old Northern Tongue*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883), I, is antiquated.

- 9 For a facsimile and a transcription, see Finnur Jónsson, *Håndskrifet Nr. 748, 4^{to}, bl. 1-6 i den Arna-magnæanske samling (Brudstykke af den ældre Edda) i fototypisk og diplomatisk gengivelse* (Copenhagen: S. L. Møllers bogtrykkeri, 1896). For online photographs, see 'AM 748 I a 4^{to}', *handrit.is*, <https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/da/AM04-0748-I-a>
- 10 Or 'Lay', 'Poem'. This ambiguity applies to other poems in the collection, but is not mentioned again.
- 11 This ambiguity also applies to other poems, but, again, it is not mentioned henceforth.
- 12 This poem is called *Skírnismál* 'The Sayings of Skírnir' in A.
- 13 Haukr was Haukr Erlendsson, a prominent Icelander who died in 1334.
- 14 For an earlier edition and translation of *Rþ.*, see U. Dronke, ed., *The Poetic Edda: Volume II. Mythological Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 161–238. Editions, with English translations, of important Eddic poems not included in the present book include C. Tolkien, trans., *The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise* (London: Nelson, 1960) (*Hervararkviða* and *Hlǫðskviða*); C. Tolley, ed. and trans., *Grottasongr: The Song of Grotti* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2008); A. Lassen, ed. and trans., *Hrafnagaldur Óðins (Forþjallsljóð)* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2011). Many Eddic verses, often variants of those found in poems included in the present edition, also appear in Snorri's *Prose Edda*. Still more survive in other Icelandic *fornaldarsögur* 'sagas of ancient times', composed from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, for which see Guðni Jónsson, ed., *Fornaldar sögur norðurlanda* (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagna-útgáfan, 1950) (FSN), and, in isolation from their surrounding prose, SPSMA VIII. For a list of additional named Eddic poems, see C. Larrington, J. Quinn and B. Schorn, ed., *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. xii, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316471685>; they include, among others, the c. 900 *Haraldskvæði* 'Poem of/about Haraldr' (*Harkv.*) by the Norwegian Þorbjörn hornklofi (SPSMA I, 91–117); the tenth-century *Hákonarmál* 'Words of Hákon' by Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson (SPSMA I, 171–95); the anonymous c. 954 *Eiríksmál* 'Words about Eiríkr' (*Eirm.*; SPSMA I, 1003–13); the anonymous thirteenth-century *Sólarljóð* 'Song of the Sun' (SPSMA VII, 287–357); *Hugsvinnsmál* 'Sayings of the Wise-Minded One' (SPSMA VII, 358–449); *Darraðarljóð* 'Song of the Battle-Pennant/Spear' (in chapter 157 of *Brennu-Njáls saga* 'Saga of Burnt-Njáll'; Einar Ól. Sveinsson, ed., *Brennu-Njáls saga*, Íslenzk fornrit 12 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1954), pp. 454–58; R. G. Poole, *Viking Poems on War and Peace: A Study in Skaldic Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 116–56); and the *Merlínusspá* 'Prophecies of Merlin' by Gunnlaugr Leifsson (d. 1218

or 1219) (*SPSMA* VIII, 38–189). Snorri quotes from nameless Eddic poems and from the otherwise lost *Heimdalargaldr* ‘Heimdallr’s Incantation’, and parts of his prose might well draw on other Eddic texts now wholly disappeared (see e.g., D. Brennecke, ‘Gab es eine *Skrýmiskviða*?’, *ANF* 96 (1981), 1–8)—as, too, may the twelfth-century Latin *Gesta Danorum* ‘Deeds of the Danes’ (*GD*) by the Danish writer Saxo Grammaticus. Finally, there appear to be some passages of Eddic verse among early Scandinavian runic texts, the interpretation of which is often disputed; these include the possibly early-ninth-century inscription on the Rök stone from Östergötland, Sweden, which may relate to the Norse apocalypse, a topic central to several mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda*; see P. Holmberg, B. Gräslund, O. Sundqvist and H. Williams, ‘The Rök Runestone and the End of the World’, *Futhark: International Journal of Runic Studies* 9–10 (2018–19), 7–38, and P. Holmberg, ‘Rök Runestone Riddles Revisited’, *Maal og Minne* 112 (2020), 37–55. The strong likelihood that there once existed a much larger corpus of (especially oral) Eddic verse than now survives means that the surviving texts ‘should be seen as more or less “coincidental” written examples of what once existed as an extensive oral tradition in Iceland as well as in mainland Scandinavia’, according to J. P. Schjødt, ‘Eddic Poetry and pre-Christian Scandinavia’, in Larrington *et al.*, *Handbook*, pp. 132–46 at 136, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316471685.008>

- 15 The prose passages probably do not predate **R** or its forebear. They are most likely accretions to the ‘original’ versions of the poems.
- 16 On this much discussed topic, see B. Fidjestøl, *The Dating of Eddic Poetry: A Historical Survey and Methodological Investigation* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1999); B. Ø. Thorvaldsen, ‘The Dating of Eddic Poetry’, in Larrington *et al.*, *Handbook*, pp. 72–91, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316471685.005>; Haukur Þorgeirsson, ‘The Dating of Eddic Poetry — Evidence From Alliteration’, in Kristján Árnason, S. Carey, T. K. Dewey, Haukur Þorgeirsson, Ragnar Ingi Áðalsteinsson and Þorhallur Eyþórsson, ed., *Approaches to Nordic and Germanic Poetry* (Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2016), pp. 257–78; C. D. Sapp, *Dating the Old Norse ‘Poetic Edda’: A Multifactorial Analysis of Linguistic Features* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1075/sigl.5>, which was published too late for its findings to be considered in this edition.
- 17 Iceland converted to Christianity in 999/1000.
- 18 For a recent interpretation of the mythological scenes on this monument, see E. Pettit, *The Waning Sword: Conversion Imagery and Celestial Myth in ‘Beowulf’* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2020), pp. 261–79, <https://doi.org/10.11647/obp.0190>. Other stone carvings from pre-Conquest England and early medieval Scandinavia also feature characters and events mentioned in Eddic poems; see L. Kopár, *Gods and Settlers: The Iconography of Norse Mythology in Anglo-Scandinavian Sculpture* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1484/m.sem-eb.5.106277>; L. Kopár, ‘Eddic Poetry and the Imagery of Stone Monuments’, in Larrington *et al.*, *Handbook*, pp. 190–211, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316471685.011>
- 19 In **R** *Hamðismál* is also called *Hamðismál in fornu* ‘Hamðismál the Old’, and *Helgakviða Hundingsbani Qnnur* quotes from *Völsungakviða in forna* ‘The Old Poem of the Völsungar’.
- 20 See many of the early poems in *SPSMA* and, for analysis of early visual representations of Norse myths and legends, M. Stern, ‘Runestone Images and Visual Communication

- in Viking Age Scandinavia' (PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2013), <http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/14291/>; also footnote 41 below.
- 21 E.g., *Óðinn kvað*: 'Óðinn said: ...' Many of these have been damaged or lost by trimming of the pages of R.
- 22 See especially, T. Gunnell, *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995); T. Gunnell, 'Eddic Performance and Eddic Audiences', in Larrington *et al.*, *Handbook*, pp. 92–113, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316471685.006>. An earlier work on this theme is B. S. Phillpotts, *The Elder Edda and Ancient Scandinavian Drama* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1920).
- 23 Gunnell, 'Eddic Performance', p. 94. Recordings on compact disc of modern performances of Eddic poems, some accompanied by traditional musical instruments, include Sequentia, *Edda: Myths from Medieval Iceland* (BMG Classics [(05472773812], 1999); Sequentia, *The Rheingold Curse: A Germanic Saga of Greed and Revenge from the Medieval Icelandic Edda* (Marc Aurel Edition [MA 20016], 2001); *Current 93 Present Sveinbjörn Beinteinsson 'Edda'* (Durtrö [Durtrö 005 CD], 1990); *Selected Readings from A New Introduction to Old Norse* (The Chaucer Studio, 2003). See also B. Bagby, 'Beowulf, the *Edda*, and the Performance of Medieval Epic: Notes from the Workshop of a Reconstructed 'Singer of Tales', in E. B. Vitz, N. F. Regalado and M. Lawrence, ed., *Performing Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 181–92. Additionally, the modern Norwegian group Wardruna composes highly atmospheric music, inspired by ancient Norse themes (including those of Eddic poetry), using a variety of traditional instruments.
- 24 Gunnell, 'Eddic Performance', p. 111.
- 25 For detailed discussion of Eddic metres, see Kristján Árnason, *The Rhythms of Dróttkvætt and Other Old Icelandic Metres* (Reykjavík: Institute of Linguistics, University of Iceland, 1991); S. Suzuki, *The Meters of Old Norse Eddic Poetry: Common Germanic Inheritance and North Germanic Innovation* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110336771>; R. D. Fulk, 'Eddic Metres', in Larrington *et al.*, *Handbook*, pp. 252–70, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316471685.014>. On alliteration specifically, see W. P. Lehmann and J. L. Dillard, *The Alliterations of the 'Edda'* (Austin, TX: Department of Germanic Languages, University of Texas, 1954); T. Shimomiya, 'Notes on Alliteration in the Poetic Edda', *Lingua Posnaniensis* 52 (2010), 79–84, <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10122-010-0015-9>; T. Shimomiya, *Alliteration in the Poetic Edda* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0353-0095-6>
- 26 Alliteration—normally of a vowel with any other vowel or with j, and of a consonant (or consonant group) with the same consonant (or consonant group)—must normally fall on the first stress of the second half-line, which must alliterate with one or more of the stressed syllables in the first half-line; alliteration may not normally fall on the fourth stress.
- 27 Throughout, Eddic poems are cited by stanza number in this edition. On *galdralag*, see E. Westcoat, 'The Goals of *galdralag*: Identifying the Historical Instances and Uses of the Metre', *Saga-Book* 40 (2016), 69–90.
- 28 There are important mitigations and exceptions, however, with some Eddic poems having probably undergone skaldic revision (such as *Hym.* and *HH. I*), and others in Eddic

style being included among the ‘skaldic’ corpus (such as *Eirm.*, *Hák.* and *Sólarljóð*). As observed in J. Harris, ‘Eddic Poetry as Oral Poetry: The Evidence of Parallel Passages in the Helgi Poems for Questions of Composition and Performance’, in R. J. Glendinning and Haraldur Bessason, ed., *Edda: A Collection of Essays* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1983), pp. 210–42 at 232: ‘The opposition skaldic: Eddic is indispensable, of course, and does reflect real differences, but it may be appropriate to think of stylistic gradations rather than irreconcilably different types of poetry’. For the proposal that skaldic poets also composed poems of the *Poetic Edda*, see E. R. Haymes, ‘The Germanic *Heldenlied* and the Poetic *Edda*: Speculations on Preliterary History’, *Oral Tradition* 19 (2004), 43–62, at 54–56. See also, on distinctions between Eddic and skaldic poetry, B. Schorn, ‘Eddic Modes and Genres’, in Larrington *et al.*, *Handbook*, pp. 231–51 at 232–34, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316471685.013>. For an introduction to skaldic poetry, see E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Scaldic Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976). For skaldic texts, along with English translations and commentary, see especially SPSMA.

- 29 For detailed studies, see R. Frank, *Old Norse Court Poetry: The ‘Dróttkvætt’ Stanza* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978); K. E. Gade, *The Structure of Old Norse Dróttkvætt Poetry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).
- 30 On this topic, see J. Quinn, ‘Kennings and Other Forms of Figurative Language in Eddic Poetry’, in Larrington *et al.*, *Handbook*, pp. 288–309, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316471685.016>. More generally, see B. Schorn, ‘Eddic Style’, in Larrington *et al.*, *Handbook*, pp. 271–87, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316471685.015>
- 31 See further Schorn, ‘Eddic Modes’, pp. 237–41.
- 32 Fuller synopses and preparatory remarks precede the text of each poem in this edition. Plot summaries are also available in N. Tetzner, *The Poetic Edda: A Study Guide* (n.pl., 2019).
- 33 It should not, however, be assumed that Eddic poems were always known by the same titles—for example, the poem entitled *Før Skírnis* in **R** is called *Skírnismál* ‘The Sayings of Skírnir’ in **A**—or even that they all had distinct names before being recorded in manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Some of the titles by which Eddic poems have come to be known appear only in other medieval texts or later manuscripts. Whether any of the titles in this edition were attached to poems much earlier than their earliest surviving manuscripts is unknown. On this topic, see J. Quinn, ‘The Naming of Eddic Mythological Poems in Medieval Manuscripts’, *Parergon* 8 (1990), 97–115, <https://doi.org/10.1353/pgn.1990.0016>
- 34 In addition to the **H** version of *Vsp.*, the four poems not in **R** but included in this edition also feature mythological beings prominently, namely the gods Óðinn (*BDr.*) and Heimdallr (*Rþ.*), the goddess Freyja and the giantess Hyndla (*Hdl.*), and a probably solar hero and a giant (*Svipdagsmál*).
- 35 See P. Hallberg, ‘Elements of Myth in the Heroic Lays of the Poetic Edda’, in B. Brogyanyi and T. Krömmelbein, ed., *Germanic Dialects: Linguistic and Philological Investigations* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1986), pp. 213–47; D. Clark, ‘Kin-Slaying in the Poetic Edda: The End of the World?’, *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 3 (2007), 21–41, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199654307.003.0004>

- 36 See C. A. Brady, 'A Note on the Historical Prototype of Sigfried', *Modern Philology* 31 (1933), 195–96.
- 37 R. D. Fulk, R. E. Bjork and J. D. Niles, ed., *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 4th edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); R. D. Fulk, ed. and trans., *The 'Beowulf' Manuscript* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).
- 38 U. Henig, ed., *Das Nibelungenlied nach der Handschrift C* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1977); H. Reichert, ed., *Das Nibelungenlied: Nach der St. Galler Handschrift* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005); J. Heinzle, ed., *Das Nibelungenlied und Die Klage nach der Handschrift 857 der Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen* (Berlin: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2013); A. T. Hatto, trans., *The Nibelungenlied*, rev. rpt. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969); C. Edwards, trans., *The Nibelungenlied: The Lay of the Nibelungs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); W. Whobrey, ed. and trans., *The Nibelungenlied with The Klage* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2018); D. G. Mowatt and H. Sacker, *The Nibelungenlied: An Interpretative Commentary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967); T. M. Andersson, *A Preface to the Nibelungenlied* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); W. McConnell, ed., *A Companion to the Nibelungenlied* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 2010).
- 39 Guðni Jónsson, ed., *Piðreks saga af Bern*, 2 vols. ([Reykjavík]: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1954); E. R. Haymes, trans., *The Saga of Thidrek of Bern* (New York: Garland, 1988). This saga was adapted into Swedish in the fifteenth century; see G. O. Hyltén-Cavallius, ed., *Sagan om Didrik af Bern* (Stockholm: Norstedt & Söner, 1850–54); I. Cumpstey, trans., *The Saga of Didrik of Bern: With the Dwarf King Laurin* (Cumbria: Skadi Press, 2017).
- 40 See R. G. Finch, ed. and trans., *Völsunga Saga: The Saga of the Volsungs* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965) (VS); also K. Grimstad, ed. and trans., *Völsunga saga: The Saga of the Volsungs*, 2nd edn (Saarbrücken: AQ-Verlag, 2000). Of the other English translations, the most recent, which has an extensive introduction, is J. E. Byock, *The Saga of the Volsungs: The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer* (Berkeley, CA: Penguin, 1990). The story was continued in the thirteenth-century *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* 'Saga of Ragnarr Hairy-Breeches' with an account of the subsequent life of Aslaug, daughter of Sigurðr and Brynhildr, her husband Ragnarr and their sons; see M. Olsen, ed., *Völsunga saga ok Ragnars saga loðbrókar* (Copenhagen: S. L. Møller, 1906–08); M. Schlauch, trans., *The Saga of the Volsungs; The Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok together with the Lay of Kraka* (New York: American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1930).
- 41 See H. R. Ellis, 'Sigurd in the Art of the Viking Age', *Antiquity* 16 (1942), 216–36; M. Blindheim, *Sigurds saga i middelalderens billedkunst* (Oslo: Universitetets Oldsaksamling, 1972); C. B. Caples, 'The Man in the Snakepit and the Iconography of the Sigurd Legend', *Rice Institute Pamphlet – Rice University Studies* 62 (1976), 1–16; J. T. Lang, 'Sigurd and Weland in Pre-Conquest Carving from Northern England', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 48 (1976), 83–94; R. N. Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England* (London: Collins, 1980); S. Margeson, 'The Völsung Legend in Medieval Art', in F. G. Anderson *et al.*, ed., *Medieval Iconography and Narrative: A Symposium* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1980), pp. 183–211; K. Düwel, 'On the Sigurd Representations in Great Britain and Scandinavia', in M. A. Jazayery and W. Winter, ed., *Languages and Cultures* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988), pp. 133–56; L. Liepe, 'Sigurdssagan i bild', *Fornvännen* 84 (1989), 1–11; J. Byock, 'Sigurðr Fáfnisbani: An Eddic Hero Carved on Norwegian Stave Churches', in T. Pàroli, ed., *Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages* (Spoleto: Presso

la sede del Centro studi, 1990), pp. 619–28; Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, ‘Gunnarr and the Snake Pit in Medieval Art and Legend’, *Speculum* 87 (2012), 1015–49, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0038713412003144>

- 42 For Faroese ballads, the most important for comparison with R’s heroic poems being *Regin smiður* ‘Regin the Smith’, *Brynhildar táttr* ‘Brynhild’s Story’ and *Høgna táttr* ‘Høgni’s Story’, see S. Grundtvig *et al.*, ed., *Føroya Kvæði: Corpus carminum Færoensium* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1941–2003); V. U. Hammershaimb, ed., *Sjúrðar kvæði* (Copenhagen: Trykt i Brödrene Berlings bogtr, 1851). For loose English translations, see E. M. Smith-Dampier, trans., *Sigurd: The Dragon-Slayer: A Faroëse Ballad-Cycle* (Oxford: Kraus Reprint Co., 1934). For Danish ballads, see S. Grundtvig *et al.*, ed., *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser* (Copenhagen: Samfundet til den danske literaturs fremme, 1853–1976); D. Kralik, *Die dänische Ballade von Grimhilds Rache und die Vorgeschichte des Nibelungenliedes* (Vienna: H. Böhlaus Nachf., Kommissionsverlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1962); H. Holzapfel, *Die dänischen Nibelungenballaden: Texte und Kommentare* (Göppingen: A. Kümmerle, 1974); G. Borrow, *Grimhild’s Vengeance: Three Ballads* (London: Good Press, 1913). For discussion, see W. B. Lockwood, ‘The Nibelungen Tradition in Faroese’, *German Life and Letters* 32 (1979), 265–72; E. Sarakaeva, ‘Nibelungs on the Margins: Transformation of the Nibelungen Legend in the Folklore of German-Scandinavian Frontier’, *Journal of Frontier Studies* 4 (2016), 76–94; E. Sarakaeva, ‘Archaization of “Nibelungen Legend” in the Folklore of German-Scandinavian Frontier’, in *4th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences and Arts, SGEM 2017* (Sofia: STEF92 Technology Ltd, 2017), II, 661–68.
- 43 For the German text with English translation, see S. Spencer and B. Millington, ed., *Wagner’s Ring of the Nibelung: A Companion* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993). For Wagner’s debt to Old Norse texts, see Árni Björnsson, *Wagner and the Volsungs: Icelandic Sources of ‘Der Ring des Nibelungen’* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2003).
- 44 See T. Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth*, rev. and expanded edn (London: Harper Collins, 2005); J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun*, ed. C. Tolkien (London: Harper Collins, 2009); P. H. Berube, ‘Tolkien’s Sigurd & Gudrún: Summary, Sources, & Analogs’, *Mythlore* 28 (2009), 45–76.
- 45 Also televised as ‘Game of Thrones’. See C. Larrington, *Winter Is Coming: The Medieval World of Game of Thrones* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780755693375>
- 46 In addition to the parallels noted in this edition, see the list of ‘general correspondences between *Volsunga saga* and its extant literary sources’ in Finch, *Volsunga Saga*, pp. 85–89.
- 47 See especially A. Heusler, ‘Die Lieder der Lücke im Codex Regius der Edda’, in A. Heusler, J. Hoops and P. Zimmermann, ed., *Germanistische Abhandlungen Hermann Paul zum 17 März 1902* (Strassburg: K. J. Trübner, 1902), pp. 1–98; T. M. Andersson, *The Legend of Brynhild* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980); T. M. Andersson, ‘The Lays in the Lacuna of Codex Regius’, in U. Dronke, Guðrún P. Helgadóttir, G. W. Weber and H. Bekker-Nielsen, ed., *Speculum Norroenum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1981), pp. 6–26. For a sceptical appraisal of Andersson’s *Legend of Brynhild*, however, see F. H. Bäuml’s review in *Speculum* 57 (1982), 346–49. Note that **Sigurðarkviða in meira* is called **Sigurðarkviða in meiri* by some scholars.

- 48 Guðrún's concern for her brothers' safety in Old Norse tradition contrasts starkly with the motivation of Kriemhilt, the corresponding character in the *Nibelungenlied*, who seeks their death to avenge her husband.
- 49 For photographs, see 'AM 242 fol.', *handrit.is*, <https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/AM02-0242>
- 50 Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, GKS 1005 fol. For photographs, see 'GKS 1005 fol.', <https://simplebooklet.com/gks1005fol#page=1>; also *Flateyjarbók (Codex Flateyensis)* Ms. No. 1005 fol. in the Old Royal Collection in The Royal Library of Copenhagen with an Introduction by Finnur Jónsson, Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevi I (Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1930).
- 51 Consequently, I largely avoid referring to works of scholarship in the notes to the poems, a notable exception being my references to D. A. H. Evans, ed., *Hávamál* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1986), <http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Text%20Series/Havamal.pdf> (supplemented by A. Faulkes, *Hávamál: Glossary and Index* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1987), <http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Text%20Series/Glossary%20and%20Index.pdf>), to which I am greatly indebted.
- 52 Additionally, both fields are covered by C. Larrington, *The Norse Myths: A Guide to the Gods and Heroes* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2017).
- 53 The *Kommentar* does not cover *Svipdagsmál*, for commentary on which, see B. Sijmons and H. Gering, ed., *Die Lieder der Edda* (Halle (Saale): Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1903–31), III(1), 399–425; P. M. W. Robinson, 'An Edition of *Svipdagsmál*' (D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1991); Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, *Eddukvæði*, II, 188–202, 437–50.
- 54 From, most notably, E. V. Gordon, *An Introduction to Old Norse*, corr. 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); S. Valfells and J. E. Cathey, *Old Icelandic: An Introductory Course* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); M. Barnes and A. Faulkes, *A New Introduction to Old Norse*, 3 parts (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2008–11), downloadable from <http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/>; J. Byock, *Viking Language 1*, 2nd edn (n. pl.: Jules William Press, 2017) and *Viking Language 2* (Los Angeles, CA: Jules William Press, 2015).
- 55 Also valuable are H. Gering, *Vollständiges Wörterbuch zu den Liedern der Edda* (Halle a. S.: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1903), https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_JBWvazAW0kC/page/n283/mode/2up; Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum antiquae linguæ septentrionalis: Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, 2nd edn (Copenhagen: Møller, 1931), <http://www.septentrionalia.net/lex/ordbog2.pdf>; R. Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 2nd edn with supplement by Sir W. A. Craigie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).
- 56 The first exception is the texts of the verses likely to have appeared in the great lacuna. For these, I have consulted earlier editions. The second exception is the text of *Svipdagsmál* (comprising *Gg.* and *Fj.*), which survives only in many late, paper manuscripts, to which I have not had access; in this case, I have consulted, and adapted, the texts in the following: S. Bugge, ed., *Norræn fornkvæði: islandsk samling af folkelige oldtidsdigte om nordens guder*

og heroer almindelig kaldet Sæmundar Edda hins fróða (Christiania: P. T. Mallings, 1867; rpt. 1965), R. C. Boer, ed., *Die Edda mit historisch-kritischem Commentar*, 2 vols. (Haarlem: H. D. Tjeenk Willink & Sons, 1922); Sijmons and Gering, Lieder; Robinson, 'Edition'; Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, *Eddukvæði*.

- 57 The textual apparatus also records enlarged initials in **R**, but only the most prominent.
- 58 Although the practice of normalization makes it easier to understand Old Norse texts, it does so at the expense of giving a misleading impression of homogeneity to a collection of originally individual works doubtless composed by different people at different times and in different places, potentially for different purposes. It eliminates much evidence of scribal practice and some evidence potentially useful for the purposes of dating and localization; it can also have implications for the study of poems' metre, as in the case of this edition's standardised use of *honum* (vs. *hánum* or *hónum*) for the dat. sg. masc. of the third-person pronoun, which is adopted following the example of Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, *Eddukvæði*. Readers should, however, still expect to encounter some differences of spelling between the Old Norse texts edited in this book, between these and the book's quotations from other editions, and especially between the texts edited in this book and those of other editions, and between all these and Old Norse dictionaries. Most notably, they will encounter orthographical differences between the texts in this edition, those in the *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda* by von See *et al.*, and the entries in *Glossary to the Poetic Edda* by La Farge and Tucker. On this topic in general, see Odd Einar Haugen, ed., *Menota Handbook 3.0*, https://www.menota.org/HB3_ch10.xml#sec10.3
- 59 Recent scholarship has rejected, or at least questioned, some of the reordering of stanzas undertaken in certain passages of certain poems as they appear in *NK*, the edition to which much of the scholarly literature (including the *Kommentar* by von See *et al.*) refers. For the reader's convenience, in cases of divergence the present edition includes the stanza numbers of the fifth edition of *NK* within brackets after the main stanza numbers; in *HH*, *II* and *Grp*. the same approach indicates the logical narrative position of certain stanzas.
- 60 Take, for example, the Old Norse 'monster'-terms *jotunn* and *purs*, both of which I, in common with many other translators, translate as 'giant', somewhat inadequately. One recent commentator has gone so far as to call this translation 'frankly indefensible' (see J. S. Hopkins, 'Eddic to English: A Survey of English Translations of the *Poetic Edda*', *Mimisbrunnr.info: Developments in Ancient Germanic Studies* (2017–), <https://www.mimisbrunnr.info/eddic-to-english-intro-background-purpose>). It should, however, be noted that, in *Beowulf*, the Scandinavian monster Grendel draws together three equivalent Old English terms: he is at once an *eoten* (etymologically an 'eater'; cognate with ON *jotunn*), a *pyrs* (originally perhaps a 'speedy, quick or strong one'; cognate with ON *purs*), and associated with *gigantas* 'giants', a term which entered Old English from Latin, which in turn borrowed it from Greek, in which language it could denote the 'giants' who fought the gods. Also, the presence of the Old Norse text in this edition mitigates, I hope, the inadequacy of my translations in this case and others.
- 61 These translations of proper names are often tentative and selective. Readers wanting more detail should consult the *Kommentar* by von See *et al.*, as well as two etymological dictionaries: J. de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 4th edn (Leiden: Brill, 2000) and Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon, *Íslensk Orðsifjabók* ([Reykjavík]: Orðabók Háskólangs, 1989, corr. rpt. 1995). Meanings for many names are also given in *SPSMA*.

- 62 Among fairly recent examples are J. C. Buddemeyer, trans., *The Elder Edda* (Eagle River, AK: Northbooks, 2009); A. Orchard, trans., *The Elder Edda: A Book of Viking Lore* (London: Penguin, 2011); J. Dodds, trans., *The Poetic Edda* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2014); C. Larrington, trans., *The Poetic Edda*, rev. edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); J. Crawford, ed. and trans., *The Poetic Edda: Stories of the Norse Gods and Heroes* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2015). Notable older translations into English include H. A. Bellows, trans., *The Poetic Edda* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1936) and L. M. Hollander, trans., *The Poetic Edda*, rev. 2nd edn (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1962). For further details and discussion, see C. Larrington, 'Translating the *Poetic Edda* into English', in D. Clark and C. Phelpstead, ed., *Old Norse Made New: Essays on the Post-Medieval Reception of Old Norse Literature and Culture* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2007), pp. 21–42; Hopkins, 'Eddic to English', <https://www.mimisbrunnr.info/eddic-to-english-intro-background-purpose>



POEMS FROM THE
CODEX REGIUS OF THE *POETIC EDDA*
(GAMMEL KONGELIG SAMLING 2365 4^{TO})

Völuspá (Codex Regius)

Völuspá (*Vsp.*) ‘The Prophecy of the Seeress’ survives in two substantially different versions in **R** (fol. 1r–3r) and **H** (fol. 20r–21r), which are therefore presented separately in this edition. Additionally, many stanzas, apparently from a third version, are quoted in *SnEGylf*, a work for which the poem is a major source. The relationships between these versions are complex and hard to define, but probably involve both oral and scribal transmission and their associated types of textual variation.

The poem, composed in *fornyrðislag*, is spoken by a seeress in the first and third persons, an enigmatic alternation perhaps suggestive of a trance-like state. She possibly speaks following payment by the god Óðinn, who, along with humankind (and maybe other sentient beings), forms her audience. Her speech, which, in the opinion of some scholars shows the influence of the pseudo-sibylline oracles of early medieval Christian tradition, is ambitious in scope: it spans the formation, corruption and destruction of the universe and its inhabitants (gods, giants, humans, dwarves and heavenly bodies), followed by its rebirth in purity—a sequence paralleled in the mythologies of other cultures. Her speech is also rich in imagery, densely allusive and temporally complex. Together, these attributes make *Vsp.* a challenging but highly rewarding poem to interpret, one that has stimulated a wealth of (sometimes conflicting) scholarly commentary. Interpretation of *Vsp.* requires considerable knowledge of Old Norse mythology, for which we are largely dependent on Snorri’s interpretation of the poem in *SnEGylf*, which, however, should not be assumed to be wholly correct, complete or unbiased. It also demands appreciation of the distinct possibility that aspects of the poem have been influenced by Christian apocalyptic traditions.

Where, when and by whom *Vsp.* was composed is uncertain, as is the case for all the poems in this book. However, Iceland in the years leading up to or following its conversion to Christianity in 999/1000 has often been favoured. This is partly due to numerous passages suggestive of the influence of the new religion, such as the punishment of oath-breakers, murderers and adulterers in *Vsp.* 37–38, reminiscent of the fate of sinners in *Revelation* 21:8, the darkening of the sun and moon and the disappearance of the stars in *Vsp.* 54–55, similar to *Mark* 13:24–25; and the penultimate stanza of **H**’s version (absent from **R**’s), which may allude to the coming of the Christian God on Doomsday, as in *Mark* 13:26. An Icelandic origin might be indicated

by the reddening of the gods' dwellings and the darkening of the sun during the summers preceding Ragnarok (*Vsp.* 40), which could refer to the visible effects of ash clouds over Iceland, an actively volcanic country. If the opening words of *Vsp.* 55 (*Sól térr sortna, sígr fold í mar* 'Sun turns black, earth sinks into sea') echo in the opening of st. 24 of *Þorfinnsdrápa* 'Þorfinnr's Poem' (*Björt verðr sól at svartri, sokkr fold í mar dökkvan* 'The bright sun will turn to black, earth sink into the dark sea'), composed by the Christian Icelander Arnórr Þórðarson jarlaskáld, perhaps in c. 1065, we may have a rough *terminus ante quem* for *Vsp.*¹

The poem's most compelling, and rather early, parallel comes not from Iceland, however, but from a northern English churchyard in what was once an Anglo-Norse context. In the grounds of the parish church of St. Mary's, Gosforth, Cumbria, stands a stone cross dating from the first half of the tenth century. In addition to a Crucifixion scene, its sides are carved with scenes highly suggestive of Ragnarok, including likely depictions of Heimdallr with his horn (cf. *Vsp.* 45); Loki's captivity and attendance by Sigyn (34); the wolf's escape from its bonds (43); and a version of Víðarr's killing of the wolf which devoured Óðinn (53). It seems very likely that poetry such as *Vsp.* inspired much of the carving on this unique monument.

Synopsis

A seeress requests an audience and announces that the god Óðinn wants her to recount her earliest memories (1). She tells of giants who fostered her, nine worlds, a glorious tree (the world-tree, Yggdrasill) beneath the ground (2), and Ymir, a giant who lived when there was otherwise only a void (3). She recalls how the sons of Burr (Óðinn, Vili and Vé) raised up earth (4), and mentions the young sun, stars and moon, before they had established their places (5).

The gods, she says, then named night and day (6). They built a temple and an altar, and made treasures and tools (7). They happily played board games and knew no want of gold, until three giantesses arrived (8). Then the gods assembled to decide about the creation of a dwarf-lord (9). There follow lists of dwarf-names, headed by Mótsognir and Durinn (at least some of this material is probably interpolated) (10–16).

The seeress then recalls the discovery on a shore of the inanimate forms of Askr and Embla, the first man and woman (17), which three gods, Óðinn, Höenir and Lóðurr, animated (18). Her memories then return to Yggdrasill, now standing tall above a spring (19), from which came three maidens (the Nornir, effectively the Northern Fates) who inscribed the destinies of humans on wood (20).

Next the seeress, who apparently refers to herself in the third person, recalls the world's first war. It may have been caused when an itinerant sorceress called Gullveig (possibly also known as Heiðr), who was possibly associated with the divine tribe

1 SPSMA II, 258–59.

called the Vanir, was suspended on spearpoints and burnt three times in the hall of Hárr (Óðinn), in an unsuccessful attempt to kill her (21–22). Having deliberated on their best course of action (23), the Æsir (the tribe of gods led by Óðinn) fought the Vanir, with Óðinn casting the first shot, but the Vanir broke into the Æsir's stronghold (24).

The war apparently having ended with the two sides reconciled and combined, the new collective of deities asked who had given the goddess Freyja to the giants (25). In response, the god Þórr broke oaths, probably by killing a giant builder to whom the gods had promised Freyja as payment for his work (26).

The seeress's thoughts turn to the god Heimdallr, whose hearing is hidden beneath Yggdrasill, and to Óðinn's sacrifice of an eye in return for wisdom (27). She relates how she once sat alone outside and was visited by Óðinn, who gazed into her eyes. She asks why he questions her (or, less likely, he asks why she questions him), and then declares that she knows everything, including how he hid his eye in the spring of Mímir (a figure of wisdom), from which Mímir drinks mead each morning (28). Óðinn, we learn, then gave her treasures (probably as payment for the recitation of this poem), and she continues her vision (29).

Valkyries are her next topic (30). Following a list of their names and references to their riding there come, at the centre of the poem, four stanzas describing the death of Baldr, son of Óðinn and his wife, Frigg. This came about by a spear of mistletoe cast by the god Hóðr, a deed for which the trickster-god Loki was deemed responsible and taken captive (31–34).

After referring to a river filled with swords and knives (35), a hall of the dwarves, and the hall of a giant (36), the seeress describes an ominous hall of snakes, where perjurers and adulterers suffered, where the dragon Niðhoggr sucked corpses and a wolf tore men's flesh (37–38). The seeress stays on the topic of wolves in describing their birth to 'the old one' in the forest of Járnviðr and prophesying that one of them, in troll-form, will (arguably) assault the sun on behalf of the moon (39), perhaps as a result of which subsequent summers will be dark and all weather treacherous (40). These signs herald Ragnarok, the Norse apocalypse, other indications of which the seeress describes in following stanzas.

She describes the giant Eggþér playing his harp, cockerels crowing and the waking of Óðinn's chosen warriors (41–42), before prophesying that the howling wolf (Garmr/Fenrir) will break free of its bonds (43). Kinsmen, she predicts, will kill each other before the world ends (44). She goes on to say that giants play, the god Heimdallr blows his horn, and Óðinn consults the head of Mímr (Mímir) in search of knowledge (45). Yggdrasill groans and shakes, and the giant (Garmr/Fenrir or Loki) breaks loose (46). Garmr/Fenrir howls and will break free (47). The giant Hrymr journeys from the east, the snake of Miðgarðr writhes, an eagle shrieks, and Naglfar (a ship?) breaks loose (48). A ship (Naglfar?) journeys from the east, bearing the giants, Loki and the wolf (49). The gods take council, the land of giants roars and dwarves groan (50).

The fire-demon Surtr arrives, probably with a radiant, fiery sword, cliffs collapse, witches wander, humans travel to Hel, the underworld of the dead, and the sky splits (51). Óðinn dies fighting the wolf, and Freyr dies fighting Surtr (52). Víðarr, Óðinn's son, avenges his father (53). Pórr (mortally wounded?) steps away from the snake of Miðgarðr (54). The sun turns black, the earth sinks into the sea, the stars disappear, and flame rages against the sky (55). The seeress's vision of Ragnarok concludes with a further reference to the wolf breaking free (56).

Next the seeress sees the green earth rising from the sea again (57). The surviving gods talk about the world-serpent and Óðinn's runes (58). They will recover their lost gaming pieces (59), fields will grow green without being sown, all evil will be remedied, and Hǫðr and Baldr will return from the dead to inhabit Óðinn's halls (60). Hœnir draws lots, and the sons of two brothers (Baldr and Hǫðr?) inhabit the world (61). She also sees a gleaming hall, located on Gimlé, where honourable people shall live happily forever (62). Her final image is of a flying Niðhoggr carrying corpses to Gimlé, after which she says she will sink (63).

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Völuspá

1. 'Hljóðs bið ek allar kindir,
meiri ok minni, mógu Heimdal lar!
Vildu at ek, Valföðr, vel fyr telja
forn spjöll fira, þau er fremst um man.
2. 'Ek man jöttna, ár um borna,
þá er forðum mik födda hófðu;
nú man ek heima, nú íviðjur,
mjötvið mæran, fyr mold neðan.
3. 'Ár var alda, þar er Ymir bygði;
vara sandr né sær né svalar unnir;
jörð fannsk æva né upphiminn,
gap var ginnunga, en gras hvergi.
4. 'Áðr Burs synir bjöðum um ypðu,
þeir er Miðgarð mæran skópu;
Sól skein sunnan á salar steina,
þá var grund gróin gróenum lauki.
5. 'Sól varp sunnan, sinni Mána,
hendi inni högri um himinjódýr;
Sól þat né vissi hvar hon sali átti,
stjórnur þat né vissu hvar þær staði áttu,
Máni þat né vissi hvat hann megins átti.
6. 'Þá gengu regin qll á rökstóla,
ginnheilög goð, ok um þat gættusk:
nótt ok niðjum nöfn um gáfu,
morgin hétu ok miðjan dag,
undorn ok aptan, árum at telja.
7. 'Hittusk Æsir á Iðavelli,
þeir er hørg ok hof hátimbruðu;
afla lögðu, auð smíðuðu,
tangir skópu ok tól gørðu.
8. 'Teflðu í túni, teitir váru,
var þeim vættergis vant ór gulli,
unz þrjár kvómu þursa meyjar,
ámátkar mjók, ór Jötunheimum.

The Prophecy of the Seeress

1. ‘A hearing I ask from all kindreds,¹
greater and lesser, the sons of Heimdallr!²
 You wish,³ Valföðr,⁴ that I well recount
ancient tales of the living, those which I recall from longest ago.⁵

2. ‘I recall giants, born of old,
those who formerly had fostered me;⁶
nine worlds I recall, nine wood-dwelling women(?),⁷
 the glorious measure-tree,⁸ beneath the ground.⁹

3. ‘It was early in ages¹⁰ when Ymir lived;¹¹
there was neither sand¹² nor sea nor cool waves;
 no earth existed at all, nor sky above,¹³
a gap of gaping abysses(?),¹⁴ and grass nowhere.

4. ‘Before¹⁵ the sons of Burr lifted up lands,¹⁶
they who gave shape to glorious Miðgarðr,¹⁷
the sun shone from the south on the hall’s stones,¹⁸
then the ground was overgrown with green leek.¹⁹

5. ‘Sól, companion of Máni,²⁰ cast from the south
her right hand²¹ over the sky-horse-deer(?),²²
 Sól did not know where she had halls,
stars did not know where they had stations,
Máni did not know what might he had.²³

6. ‘Then all the great powers, the most holy gods,
went to their doom-seats,²⁴ and deliberated about it:
 they gave names to night and its kindred,
 called them morning and midday,
afternoon and evening, to count the years.²⁵

- 7.²⁶ ‘The Æsir met on Iðavöllr,²⁷
they who erected an altar and a temple high,²⁸
 they set up forges, fashioned treasure,
 shaped tongs and made tools.

8. ‘They played at tables²⁹ in the meadow,³⁰ were merry,
there was for them no whit of a want of gold;
 until three maidens of giants came,³¹
immensely mighty, from Jötunheimar.³²

9. ‘Þá gengu regin oll á rökstóla,
ginnheilög goð, ok um þat gættusk,
hverr skyldi dverga dróttin skepja
ór Brimis blóði ok ór blám leggjum.
10. ‘Þar var Mótsognir mæztr um orðinn
dverga allra, en Durinn annarr;
þeir manlíkun mórg um gørðu,
dvergar, ór jörðu, sem Durinn sagði.
11. ‘Nýi ok Niði, Norðri ok Suðri,
Austri ok Vestri, Alþjófr, Dvalinn,
Bívorr, Bávorr, Bömburr, Nóri,
Án ok Ánarr, Ái, Mjöðvitnir,
12. ‘Veigr ok Gandálfr, Vindálfr, Práinn,
Pekkr ok Þorinn, Þrór, Vitr ok Litr,
Nár ok Nýráðr — nú hefi ek dverga —
Reginn ok Ráðsviðr — rétt um talða.
13. ‘Fili, Kíli, Fundinn, Náli,
Hepti, Víli, Hánarr, Svíurr,
Frár, Hornbori, Frægr ok Lóni,
Aurvangr, Jari, Eikinskjaldi.
14. ‘Mál er dverga í Dvalins liði
ljóna kindum til Lofars telja:
þeir er sóttu frá Salarsteini
Aurvanga sjöt til Jöruvalla.
15. ‘Þar var Draupnir ok Dólgþrasir,
Hár, Haugspori, Hlévangr, Glói,
Skirvir, Virvir, Skáfiðr, Ái,
16. ‘Álfr ok Yngvi, Eikinskjaldi,
Fjalarr ok Frosti, Finnur ok Ginnarr;
þat mun uppi, meðan óld lifir,
langniðja tal Lofars hafat.
17. ‘Unz þrír kvómu ór því liði,
qflgir ok ástgir, Æsir, at húsi;
fundu á landi, lítt megandi,
Ask ok Emblu, ørlöglausa.

9. 'Then all the great powers, the most holy gods,
went to their doom-seats and deliberated about it:
 who³³ should devise³⁴ the lord of dwarves³⁵
 from Brimir's blood and from blue limbs.³⁶
10. 'There Mótsognir³⁷ was made³⁸ greatest
 of all dwarves, and Durinn³⁹ second;
 they made many man-shapes,⁴⁰
 [these] dwarves, from earth,⁴¹ as Durinn said.⁴²
11. 'Nýi and Niði,⁴³ Norðri and Suðri,⁴⁴
Austri and Vestri,⁴⁵ Alþjófr,⁴⁶ Dvalinn,⁴⁷
 Bívorr,⁴⁸ Bávorr, Bómburr,⁴⁹ Nóri,⁵⁰
 Án⁵¹ and Ánarr,⁵² Ái,⁵³ Mjöðvitnir,⁵⁴
12. 'Veigr⁵⁵ and Gandálfr,⁵⁶ Vindálfr,⁵⁷ Þráinn,⁵⁸
Þekkr⁵⁹ and Þorinn,⁶⁰ Þrórr,⁶¹ Vitr⁶² and Litr,⁶³
Nár⁶⁴ and Nýráðr⁶⁵ — now I have enumerated —
Reginn⁶⁶ and Ráðsviðr⁶⁷ — the dwarves rightly.
13. 'Fili,⁶⁸ Kíli,⁶⁹ Fundinn,⁷⁰ Náli,⁷¹
Hepti,⁷² Víli,⁷³ Hánarr,⁷⁴ Svíurr,⁷⁵
Frár,⁷⁶ Hornbori,⁷⁷ Frægr⁷⁸ and Lóni,⁷⁹
 Aurvanger,⁸⁰ Jari,⁸¹ Eikinskjaldi.⁸²
14. 'It's time to count the dwarves in Dvalinn's company⁸³
 for the descendants of men⁸⁴ — down to Lofarr:⁸⁵
 they who set out from Salarsteinn⁸⁶
 for the dwellings of Aurvanger at Jøruvellir.⁸⁷
15. 'There was Draupnir⁸⁸ and Dólgþrasir,⁸⁹
Hár,⁹⁰ Haugspori,⁹¹ Hlévangr,⁹² Glói,⁹³
 Skirvir,⁹⁴ Virvir,⁹⁵ Skáfiðr,⁹⁶ Ái,⁹⁷
16. 'Álfr⁹⁸ and Yngvi,⁹⁹ Eikinskjaldi,¹⁰⁰
Fjalarr¹⁰¹ and Frosti,¹⁰² Finnr¹⁰³ and Ginnarr,¹⁰⁴
that will be remembered as long as the world lasts,¹⁰⁵
 the long list of Lofarr's forefathers.
17. 'Until three came from *that* company,¹⁰⁶
 strong and kind, Æsir, to a house,¹⁰⁷
 they found on the shore,¹⁰⁸ with little strength,
 Askr and Embla, lacking fate.¹⁰⁹

18. 'Qnd þau né áttu, óð þau né høfðu,
lá né læti né litu góða;
qnd gaf Óðinn, óð gaf Hænir,
lá gaf Lóðurr ok litu góða.
19. 'Ask veit ek standa, heitir Yggdrasill,
hár baðmr ausinn hvíta auri;
þaðan koma døggvar, þær í dala falla,
stendr æ yfir grønn Urðar brunni.
20. 'Þaðan koma meyjar, margs vitandi,
þrjár, ór þeim sæ er und þolli stendr;
Urð hétu eina, aðra Verðandi —
skáru á skíði — Skuld ina þriðju;
þær lög lögðu, þær líf kuru
alda börnum, ørlög seggja.
21. 'Þat man hon fólkvíg fyrst í heimi,
er Gullveigu geirum studdu,
ok í høll Hárs hana brendu;
þrysvar brendu þrysvar borna,
opt, ósjaldan, þó hon enn lifir.
22. 'Heiði hana hétu, hvars til húsa kom,
vølu velspá, vitti hon ganda;
seið hon kunni, seið hon leikin,
æ var hon angan illrar brúðar.
23. 'Þá gengu regin qll á rökstóla,
ginnheilög goð, ok um þat gættusk,
hvárt skyldu Æsir afráð gjalda
eða skyldu goðin qll gildi eiga.
24. 'Fleygði Óðinn ok í fólk um skaut —
þat var enn fólkvíg fyrst í heimi;
brotinn var borðvegr borgar Ása,
knáttu Vanir vígspá vøllu sporna.
25. 'Þá gengu regin qll á rökstóla,
ginnheilög goð, ok um þat gættusk:
hverr hefði lopt allt lævi blandit
eða ætt jötuns Óðs mey gefna.

18. 'They¹¹⁰ possessed no breath, they had no inspiration,¹¹¹
no locks¹¹² or voice¹¹³ or good colours;¹¹⁴
Óðinn gave breath,¹¹⁵ Hoenir gave inspiration,¹¹⁶
Lóðurr¹¹⁷ gave locks and good colours.¹¹⁸
- 19.¹¹⁹ 'I know a standing ash, it's called Yggdrasill,¹²⁰
a tall tree doused with white mud,¹²¹
from there come dews, those that fall in dales;¹²²
it always stands, green, above Urðr's spring.¹²³
20. 'From there come maidens, knowing many things,
three [maidens], from the sea which stands under the tree;¹²⁴
one was called¹²⁵ Urðr, the second Verðandi,
— they inscribed on a stick¹²⁶ — the third Skuld;¹²⁷
they laid down laws, they chose lives
for the sons of men, the fates of men.
21. 'She recalls it,¹²⁸ the first tribe-war in the world,
when they stuck Gullveig up on spears,¹²⁹
and in Hárr's hall burned her;¹³⁰
thrice they burned the thrice-born,¹³¹
often, not seldom, yet she still lives.
22. 'Heiðr they called her,¹³² wherever she came to houses,¹³³
a seeress of good prophecies,¹³⁴ she drummed up spirits(?);¹³⁵
she knew sorcery, she practised sorcery while possessed,¹³⁶
she was ever the delight of an evil bride.
23. 'Then all the great powers, the most holy gods,
went to their doom-seats and deliberated about it:
whether the Æsir must pay a great penalty,
or all the gods must have offerings.¹³⁷
24. 'Óðinn let fly and shot into the army¹³⁸ —
that was still the first tribe-war in the world;
broken was the board-way of the Æsir's stronghold,¹³⁹
the Vanir bestrode¹⁴⁰ the plains with a battle-spell.¹⁴¹
- 25.¹⁴² 'Then all the great powers, the most holy gods,¹⁴³
went to their doom-seats and deliberated about it:
who¹⁴⁴ had mingled all the air with mischief,¹⁴⁵
and given Óðr's wife¹⁴⁶ to the giant's family.¹⁴⁷

26. 'Þórr einn þar var, þprunginn móði,
hann sjaldan sitr er hann slíkt um fregn;
á gengusk eiðar, orð ok sœri,
mál oll meginlig er á meðal fóru.
27. 'Veit hon Heimdallar hljóð um fólgit
undir heiðvönum helgum baðmi;
á sér hon ausask aurgum forsi
af veði Valfǫðrs. Vituð ér enn, eða hvat?
28. 'Ein sat hon úti, þá er inn aldni kom,
Yggjungr Ása, ok í augu leit:
"Hvers fregnið mik? Hví freistið mín?
Allt veit ek, Óðinn, hvar þú auga falt,
í inum mæra Mímis brunni;
drekkir mjøð Mímir morigin hverjan
af veði Valfǫðrs!" Vituð ér enn, eða hvat?
29. 'Valði henni Herfǫðr hringa ok men,
fé, spjoll spaklig ok spáganda;
sá hon vítt ok um vítt of verold hverja.
30. 'Sá hon valkyrjur, vítt um komnar,
gorvar at ríða til goðþjóðar;
Skuld helt skildi, en Skögul ɔnnur,
Gunnr, Hildr, Gondul ok Geirskögul;
nú eru talðar nönnur Herjans,
gorvar at ríða grund, valkyrjur.
31. 'Ek sá Baldri, blóðgum tívur,
Óðins barni, ørlög folgin;
stóð um vaxinn, vyllum hæri,
mjór ok mjók fagr, mistilteinn.
32. 'Varð af þeim meiði, er mær sýndisk,
harmflaug hættlig; Höðr nam skjóta;
Baldrs bróðir var of borinn snemma,
sá nam Óðins sonr einnættr vega.
33. 'Þó hann æva hendr né hófuð kembði,
áðr á bál um bar Baldrs andskota;
en Frigg um grét í Fensolum
vá Valhallar. Vituð ér enn, eða hvat?

26. 'Pórr alone was there,¹⁴⁸ swollen with anger,
he seldom sits when he hears of such;
oaths were stamped on, words and sworn declarations,
all the binding speeches which had passed between them.
27. 'She knows of Heimdallr's hearing,¹⁴⁹
hidden under the light-accustomed holy tree,¹⁵⁰
she sees a river splashing in a muddy fall¹⁵¹
from Valfǫðr's pledge.¹⁵² Would you know still [more], or what?¹⁵³
28. 'Alone she sat outside when the old one came,¹⁵⁴
Yggjungr¹⁵⁵ of the Æsir, and looked into her eyes:¹⁵⁶
"What do you ask me? Why do you test me?¹⁵⁷
I know it all, Óðinn, where you hid your eye,
in the famous spring of Mímir;¹⁵⁸
Mímir drinks mead every morning
from Valfǫðr's pledge!"¹⁵⁹ Would you know still [more], or what?
29. 'Herfǫðr selected for her rings and torcs,¹⁶⁰
treasure,¹⁶¹ wise words and prophecy-staffs;
she saw far and wide over every world.
30. 'She saw valkyries,¹⁶² come from far and wide,
ready to ride to the god-realm.¹⁶³
Skuld held a shield,¹⁶⁴ and Skögul¹⁶⁵ next,
Gunnr,¹⁶⁶ Hildr,¹⁶⁷ Gondul¹⁶⁸ and Geirskogul,¹⁶⁹
now Herjann's women are enumerated,¹⁷⁰
ready to ride the earth — valkyries.
31. 'I saw for Baldr,¹⁷¹ for the bloody sacrifice,¹⁷²
for Óðinn's child, fates concealed,¹⁷³
[full-]grown there stood, higher than the fields,¹⁷⁴
slender and most fair, the mistletoe.¹⁷⁵
32. 'From that tree,¹⁷⁶ which seemed slender,¹⁷⁷
came a dangerous harm-shaft; Hǫðr shot.¹⁷⁸
Baldr's brother was soon born,¹⁷⁹
that son of Óðinn struck when one night old.¹⁸⁰
33. 'He never washed his hands or combed his head,¹⁸¹
before he carried Baldr's opponent to the pyre;¹⁸²
but Frigg¹⁸³ wept in Fensalir¹⁸⁴
for the woe of Valhöll.¹⁸⁵ Would you know still [more], or what?

34. 'Hapt sá hon liggja undir Hveralundi,
 lægjarns líki Loka ápekkjan;
 þar sitr Sigyn, þeygi um sínum
 ver velglyjuð. Vituð ér enn, eða hvat?
35. 'Á fellr austan um eitrdala,
 sóxum ok sverðum, Slíðr heitir sú.
36. 'Stóð fyr norðan á Niðavöllum
 salr ór gulli Sindra ættar;
 en annarr stóð á Ókólni,
 bjórsalr jötuns, en sá Brimir heitir.
37. 'Sal sá hon standa sólu fjarri,
 Náströndu á, norðr horfa dyrr;
 fellu eitrdropar inn um ljóra,
 sá er undinn salr orma hryggjum.
38. 'Sá hon þar vaða þunga strauma
 menn meinsvara ok morðvarga,
 ok þanns annars glepr eyrarúnu;
 þar saug Niðhoggr nái framgengna,
 sleit vargr vera. Vituð ér enn, eða hvat?
39. 'Austr sat in aldna í Járniði
 ok föddi þar Fenris kindir;
 verðr af þeim öllum einna nokkurr
 tungls tjúgari í trolls hamí.
40. 'Fyllisk fjørvi feigra manna,
 rýðr ragna sjöt rauðum dreyra;
 svört var ða sólskin of sumur eptir,
 veðr öll válynd. Vituð ér enn, eða hvat?
41. 'Sat þar á haugi ok sló hörpu
 gýgjar hirðir, glaðr Eggþér;
 gólf um honum í gaglviði
 fagrrauðr hani, sá er Fjalarr heitir.
42. 'Gólf um Ásum Gullinkambi,
 sá vekr hólða at Herjaföðrs;
 en annarr gelr fyr jörð neðan,
 sótrauðr hani, at sölum Heljar.

34. 'A captive she saw lying under Hveralundr,¹⁸⁶
like¹⁸⁷ to malevolent Loki in form,¹⁸⁸
there sits Sigyn, though not at all
well-pleased about¹⁸⁹ her man.¹⁹⁰ Would you know still [more],
or what?
35. 'A river falls from the east through venom-dales,
with knives and swords. It's named Sliðr.¹⁹¹
36. 'There stood to the north on Niðavellir¹⁹²
a hall of gold of Sindri's kindred;¹⁹³
and another stood at Ókólnir,¹⁹⁴
the beer-hall of a giant, and he's called Brimir.¹⁹⁵
- 37.¹⁹⁶ 'She saw a hall standing far from the sun,¹⁹⁷
on Náströnd,¹⁹⁸ the doors face north,¹⁹⁹
venom-drops fell in through the roof-vent;
that hall is wound with the spines of snakes.
38. 'There she saw wading swift currents²⁰⁰
perjured people and murder-wolves,²⁰¹
and the one who seduces another's wife,²⁰²
there Niðhoggr sucked the corpses of the deceased,²⁰³
the wolf²⁰⁴ tore men. Would you know still [more], or what?
- 39.²⁰⁵ 'East in Járnviðr sat the old one²⁰⁶
and there gave birth to²⁰⁷ Fenrir's brood,²⁰⁸
from among all those a certain one becomes²⁰⁹
the moon's²¹⁰ pitchforker(?)²¹¹ in troll's form.²¹²
40. 'He fills himself²¹³ with the flesh of the doomed,²¹⁴
reddens gods' dwellings²¹⁵ with red blood;
dark was the sunshine then²¹⁶ in following summers,²¹⁷
all weather treacherous.²¹⁸ Would you know still [more],
or what?
41. 'A giantess's²¹⁹ herdsman, happy Eggþér,²²⁰
sat there on a grave-mound and struck a harp;
above him, in the gosling-tree,²²¹ crowed
a fair-red cockerel — he's called Fjalarr.²²²
42. 'Gullinkambi²²³ crowed above the Æsir,
he wakens heroes in Herjafǫrðr's hall,²²⁴
but another crows beneath the earth,
a sooty-red cockerel, in the halls of Hel.²²⁵

43. 'Geyr Garmr mjók fyr Gnipahelli,
festr mun slitna en freki renna;
fjolð veit hon frœða, fram sé ek lengra,
um ragna rök römm, sigtíva.
44. 'Brœðr munu berjask ok at bönum verða,
munu systrungar sifjum spilla;
hart er í heimi, hórdómr mikill;
skeggold, skálmyld — skildir ru klofnir —
vindold, vargold, áðr verold steypisk;
mun engi maðr qðrum þyrra.
45. 'Leika Míms synir, en mjótuðr kyndisk
at inu galla Gjallarhorni;
hátt blæss Heimdallr — horn er á lopti —
mælir Óðinn við Míms hofuð.
46. 'Ymr it aldna tré, en jötunn losnar;
skelfr Yggdrasils askr standandi.
47. 'Geyr nú Garmr mjók fyr Gnipahelli,
festr mun slitna en freki renna;
fjolð veit hon frœða, fram sé ek lengra,
um ragna rök römm, sigtíva.
48. 'Hrymr ekr austan, hefisk lind fyrir,
snýsk Jörmungandr í jötunmóði,
ormr knýr unnir, en ari hlakkar,
slítr nái neffölr, Naglfar losnar.
49. 'Kjóll ferr austan, koma munu Muspells
um log lýðir, en Loki stýrir;
fara fífls megir með freka allir,
þeim er bróðir Býleipts í fór.
50. 'Hvat er með Ásum? Hvat er með álfum?
Gnýr allr Jötunheimr, Æsir ru á þingi;
stynja dvergar fyr steindurum,
veggbergs vísir. Vituð ér enn, eða hvat?
51. 'Surtr ferr sunnan með sviga lævi,
skínn af sverði sól valtíva;
grjótbjørg gnata en gífr rata,
troða halir Helveg, en himinn klofnar.

43. 'Garmr howls loudly before Gnipahellir,²²⁶
the fetter will break and the ravener run free,²²⁷
she knows much lore, I see further ahead,
about the great doom of the powers, of the victory-gods.²²⁸
- 44.²²⁹ 'Brothers will battle and slay each other,
cousins will break the bonds of kin;
it's harsh in the world, great whoredom,
axe-age, sword-age — shields are cloven —
wind-age, wolf-age,²³⁰ before the world collapses;
no one will show mercy to another.
45. 'Mímr's sons play,²³¹ and destiny is kindled
at [the sound of?] the resonant Gjallarhorn,²³²
Heimdallr blows loud — the horn's aloft²³³ —
Óðinn speaks to Mímr's head.²³⁴
46. 'The ancient tree groans, and the giant breaks loose,²³⁵
the ash of Yggdrasill shakes as it stands.²³⁶
47. 'Now Garmr howls loudly before Gnipahellir,
the fetter will break and the ravener run free;
she knows much lore, I see further ahead,
about the great doom of the powers, of the victory-gods.
- 48.²³⁷ 'Hrymr drives from the east,²³⁸ heaves his shield before him,
Jörmungandr writhes in giant-rage,²³⁹
the snake lashes waves, and the eagle shrieks,
the fallow-nosed one tears corpses,²⁴⁰ Naglfar breaks loose.²⁴¹
- 49.²⁴² 'A²⁴³ ship fares from the east,²⁴⁴ Muspell's forces²⁴⁵
will come over the sea, and Loki steers;
all the giant's²⁴⁶ kindred travel with the ravener,²⁴⁷
Býleiptr's brother is with them on the voyage.²⁴⁸
- 50.²⁴⁹ 'How is it with the Æsir? How is it with the elves?²⁵⁰
All Jötunheimr roars, the Æsir are in council;
dwarves groan before stone-doors,
wise ones of the wall-rock.²⁵¹ Would you know still [more], or what?
- 51.²⁵² 'Surtr travels from the south with the destruction of twigs,²⁵³
the sun shines from the sword of the gods of the slain,²⁵⁴
rocky cliffs collapse and witches wander,²⁵⁵
men tread the Hel-way,²⁵⁶ and the heavens are cloven.

52. 'Þá kómr Hlínar harmr annarr fram,
er Óðinn ferr við úlf vega,
en bani Belja bjartr at Surti;
þá mun Friggjar falla Angantýr.
53. 'Þá kómr inn mikli mógr Sigfǫður,
Víðarr, vega at valdýri;
lætr hann megi Hveðrungs mund um standa
hjor til hjarta; þá er hefnt fōður.
54. 'Þá kómr inn mæri mógr Hlóðynjar,
gengr Óðins sonr við úlf vega;
drepr hann af móði Miðgarðs véur;
munu halir allir heimstǫð ryðja;
gengr fet níu Fjörgynjar burr,
neppr, frá naðri niðs ókvíðnum.
55. 'Sól tér sortna, sígr fold í mar,
hverfa af himni heiðar stjórnur;
geisar eimi við aldnara,
leikr hár hiti við himin sjálfan.
56. 'Geyr nú Garmr mjók fyr Gniphahelli,
festr mun slitna en freki renna;
fjolð veit hon frœða, fram sé ek lengra,
um ragna rök rømm, sigtiva.
57. 'Sér hon upp koma qðru sinni
jorð ór ægi, iðjagrœna;
falla forsar, flygr ɔrn yfir,
sá er á fjalli fiska veiðir.
58. 'Finnask Æsir á Iðavelli
ok um moldþinur mátkan dœma,
ok á Fimbultýs fornar rúnar.
59. 'Par munu eptir undrsamligar
gullnar tóflur í grasi finnask,
þær í árdaga áttar hofðu.
60. 'Munu ósánir akrar vaxa,
bøls mun alls batna; Baldr mun koma;
búa þeir Höðr ok Baldr Hropts sigtóptir,
vel, valtívar. Vituð ér enn, eða hvat?

- 52.²⁵⁷ 'Then Hlín's second sorrow comes to pass,²⁵⁸
when Óðinn goes to fight against the wolf,
and the bright slayer of Beli against Surtr,²⁵⁹
then Frigg's Angantýr will fall.²⁶⁰
53. 'Then comes the mighty son of Sigfaðir,²⁶¹
Víðarr,²⁶² to fight against the slaughter-beast,²⁶³
with his hand²⁶⁴ he lets a sword stand at the heart
of Hveðrungr's son;²⁶⁵ then is his father avenged.
54. 'Then comes the glorious child of Hlóðyn,²⁶⁶
Óðinn's son²⁶⁷ goes to fight against the wolf(?);²⁶⁸
he strikes²⁶⁹ Miðgarðr's guardian in anger,²⁷⁰
all men will abandon the homestead,²⁷¹
Fjörgyn's son²⁷² goes nine steps,
expiring(?), from the snake unapprehensive of the dark moon(?).²⁷³
55. 'The sun turns black, earth sinks into the sea,²⁷⁴
bright stars vanish from the sky;
ember-smoke rages against the life-nourisher,²⁷⁵
high heat²⁷⁶ sports against the sky itself.
56. 'Now Garmr howls loudly before Gniphellir,
the fetter will break and the ravener run free;
she knows much lore, I see further ahead,
about the great doom of the powers, of the victory-gods.
57. 'She sees coming up for a second time
earth, green again, from the sea;
waterfalls tumble, an eagle flies above,
the one who hunts fish on the fell.²⁷⁷
58. 'The Æsir find each other on Iðavöllr
and talk about the mighty earth-rope,²⁷⁸
and Fimbultýr's ancient runes.²⁷⁹
59. 'There in the grass will be found again
wonderful golden gaming-pieces,
those they had owned in early days.²⁸⁰
60. 'Unsown acres will sprout,
all evil will be corrected; Baldr will come;
Höðr and Baldr will inhabit Hroptr's victory-halls²⁸¹
well, [as] gods of the slain.²⁸² Would you know still [more], or what?

61. ‘Pá kná Hœnir hlautvið kjósa,
ok burir byggja brœðra tveggja
vindheim víðan. Vituð ér enn, eða hvat?’
62. ‘Sal sér hon standa, sólu fegra,
gulli þakðan, á Gimlé;
þar skulu dyggvar dróttir byggja
ok um aldrdaga ynðis njóta.
63. ‘Þar kœmr inn dimmi dreki fljúgandi,
naðr fránn, neðan frá Niðafjöllum;
berr sér í fjoðrum — flýgr vøll yfir —
Niðhoggr, nái. Nú mun hon sökkvask.’

61. 'Then Hœnir can select the [sacrificial] lot-twigs,²⁸³
and the sons of two brothers²⁸⁴ inhabit
the wide wind-home.²⁸⁵ Would you know still [more], or what?
- 62.²⁸⁶ 'She sees a hall standing, fairer than the sun,
thatched with gold, on Gimlé,²⁸⁷
there shall honourable hosts²⁸⁸ settle
and enjoy delight during their life-days.
63. 'There the dim²⁸⁹ dragon comes flying,
the glistening snake, from beneath, from Niðafjöll,²⁹⁰
Niðhoggr carries in his wings²⁹¹ — he flies over the field —
corpses.²⁹² Now she will sink.'²⁹³

Textual Apparatus to *Voluspá* (Codex Regius)

Voluspá] Absent from **R**, but the title *Voluspá* appears repeatedly in *SnEGylf*

Hljóðs 1/1] The first letter is large, inset and greenish in **R**

1/4 *Heimdallar*] **R** *heimdalar*

2/3 *pá*] **R** corrected from *pau* (cf. 1/8 *pau*)

2/6] *íviðjur*] **R** -ur abbreviation erased by a later hand, but apparently discernible under ultraviolet light

3/7 *ginnunga*] **R** corrected from *gríNvnga*

4/6 *á*] **R** corrected from *af*

4/6 *steina*] **R** corrected from *steini*

5/4 *himinjódýr*] **R** *himin iodyr*

6/1 *gengu*] **R** gen | *gengo*

8/5 *þrjár*] **R** III

9/1–4 *gengu* ... *gættusk*] **R** abbreviated g. r. a. ar.

9/6 *dróttin*] **R** *drótin*

10/1 *var*] **R** absent; supplied from **H**

12/1 *ok*] **R** corrected from *oc* | *oc*

12/4 *Litr*] **R** followed by *oc vitr*, with *vitr* deleted by underdotting

14/6 *frá Salarsteini*] **R** corrected from *Aurvanga siot til*

16/3 *Frosti*] **R** *frostri*

17/1 *þrír*] **R** *þríar* (cf. 8/5)

17/6 *megandi*] **R** *megan-* illegible, so supplied from **H**

18/2 *né høfðu*] **R** *né høf-* illegible, so supplied from **H**

18/3 *né læti*] **R** illegible, so supplied from **H**

18/6 *gaf Hænir*] **R** *gaf Hæn-* illegible

21/3 *Gullveigu*] **R** last letter erased by a later hand

22/6 *leikin*] **R** *leikiN*

22/8 *brúðar*] **R** corrected from *þróðar* 'of a people'

23/1–4 *gengu* ... *gættusk*] **R** abbreviated g. r. a. a.

25/1–4 *gengu* ... *gættusk*] **R** abbreviated g. r. a.

25/5 *hverr*] **R** *hverir* (pl.); emended from **H**

27/1] *Heimdallar*] **R** *heimdalar*

28/9 *i*] R *pitt*, with -*i*- and -*t*- deleted by underdotting

28/13–14 *Valföðrs ... hvat*] R abbreviated *v. v. e. e. h.*

31/4 *fólgin*] R *folgiN*

31/6 *völlum*] R *vollo*

32/2 *mær*] R abbreviated *m* with superscript bar

33/7 *vá*] R corrected from *vorðr* 'guardian'

33/8] R abbreviated *v. e. e. e. h.*

34/3] R *lægjarn*

34/8] R abbreviated *V. þ. e. h.*

36/2 *-völlum*] R corrected from *fiollom* (cf. 64/4)

38/3–4 *meinsvara ok morðvarga*] R word order corrected from *morð vargar meins vara oc*

38/5 *þanns*] R *þaNz* with -*z* erased, but still discernible

38/7 *saug*] R *súg*; I emend from H

38/10] R abbreviated *v. e e. e. h.*

40/8] R abbreviated *v. e. h.*

42/4 *at Herjaföðrs*] R preceded by *at hiarar* (probably a scribal error, though the sense 'at/to the sword (of Herjaföðr)' has been suggested)

43/8 *rømm*] R *røm*

45/1 *Leika*] The first letter is three lines deep in the inner margin of R

45/3 *inu*] R *en*; emended from H

46/1–2] R preceded by an erasure of the same words

47/1–8 *Garmr... sigtíva*] R abbreviated *g.*

49/8 *Býleipts*] R *byleipz*

50/8] R abbreviated *v. e. e. h.*

56/1–8] R abbreviated *Geyr. n.*

60/4 *Baldr mun*] R possibly marks these words for transposition (i.e., to *mun Baldr*)

60/8] R abbreviated *v. e e. h.*

61/3 *burir*] R *byrir*, altered from *burir*

61/6] R abbreviated *v. e. e. h.*

64/3] R followed by an erasure, perhaps of *nepp*

64/4 *frá*] R faint

Notes to the Translation

- 1 The speaker of *Vsp.* is a *vqlva*, a staff (*vqlr*)-bearing seeress capable of mediumship and sorcery. She sometimes refers to herself (or another seeress) in the third person, in which case she perhaps channels the voice of a prior or future incarnation of herself; cf. the thrice-born nature of Gullveig in *Vsp.* 21 and the comments on rebirth in the prose following *HHv.* 43 and *HH. II* 4, 51. *Vsp. H 1* has *allar helgar kindir* ‘all holy kindreds’, which is usually thought the metrically better reading.
- 2 The extent and nature of the seeress’s audience is uncertain. It could be all sentient beings, including the gods, but the ‘sons of Heimdallr’ are probably men; cf. *Rþ.* and *Hdl.* 43. The name *Heimdallr* is interpretable as ‘(Burgeoning) Home/World Tree’ or perhaps ‘Home/World Light’, and its divine bearer is probably identifiable on some level with the world-tree. Humans, it appears, are scions or ‘chips off the old block’; cf. *Vsp.* 17.
- 3 The form *vildu* appears equivalent to *villtu* in *Vsp. H 1*, which is an unambiguously second-person form. An alternative translation of *vildu*, as ‘they wished’, seems less likely in context, assuming the seeress’s recitation follows on from the events of *Vsp.* 28–29.
- 4 ‘Slaughtered-Corpse Father’, an alias of the god Óðinn. This word is partly illegible in the facsimile; this reading is taken from earlier editions.
- 5 If *Vsp.* 28–29 are interpreted correctly below, the following ‘prophecy’ (which includes recollection of past events) was possibly paid for earlier by Óðinn, after the seeress had ‘sat outside’ to communicate with the divine. Some scholars argue, by comparison with *BDr.* 4, that Óðinn has awakened her from the dead.
- 6 Or ‘had given birth to me in former days’.
- 7 The nine worlds are obscure, but *Vm.* 43 refers to ‘nine worlds beneath Niflhel’; alternatively, they might include those of gods (Æsir and Vanir), humans, giants, dwarves, elves and the dead. Also obscure are the nine women, but *íviðjur* is probably the pl. of a term for a troll-woman or giantess who, originally at least, perhaps lived ‘in (í) a tree/wood (*viðr*)’; the sg. *íviðja* bears this general sense in a list of names in *SPSMA III*, 727–28 and probably in *Hdl.* 48. Note, in *Hdl.* 35, 37, the nine giantess-mothers of Heimdallr. Other possibilities are that *íviðjur* refers to withies/branches or withy-like roots of the world-tree (cf. *viðja* ‘withy’, pl. *viðjur*, though the initial *i-* would be obscure), or relates to OE *inwid/inwit* ‘fraud, evil’.
- 8 Yggdrasill, the tree which, by defining the world, ‘measures’ its limits. Alternatively, ‘well-proportioned tree’ or ‘tree that metes out fate’; cf. *Fj.* 19–22.
- 9 Presumably as either a seed or a fully grown (inverted?) subterranean world-tree.
- 10 Or perhaps ‘It was the beginning of ages’. The same phrase appears in *HH. I* 1.
- 11 *Ymir* ‘Twin’ is a primordial giant; his name might denote a hermaphrodite, one of ‘twin kind’ (cf. *Vm.* 30, 33) or reflect an ancient Indo-European creation myth in which ‘Man’ sacrificed his ‘Twin’. Cf. *SnEGylf* (6–8, pp. 11–12), *Vm.* 21 and *Grm.* 40; also *SnEGylf* (4, p. 9), which quotes a version of this stanza that has, in addition to minor variations, *ekki var* ‘nothing was’ instead of *Ymir bygði* ‘Ymir lived’.
- 12 I.e., sandy shore.

- 13 Literally, 'up-sky'. The alliterative pairing *jörð ... upphiminn* 'earth ... sky above', also seen in *Vm.* 20, *þrk.* 2, *Od.* 17 and paralleled in Old English, Old Saxon and Old High German poetry, probably stems from ancient Germanic oral tradition.
- 14 The meaning of *ginnunga* is uncertain. The void is now better known, from *SnEGylf* (e.g., 5, p. 10), as *Ginnungagap*.
- 15 I.e., 'Before, that was, ...'
- 16 *SnEGylf* (6–8, pp. 11–12) says that Burr (otherwise *Borr*, as in H) was the son of Búri, the man formed when Auðhumla, the first cow, licked salty stones. Burr married the giantess Bestla (cf. *Háv.* 140) and they had three sons—Óðinn, Vili and Vé—who killed Ymir and used parts of his corpse to make the world; cf. *Vm.* 21 and *Grm.* 40–41. Judging from *Vsp.* 57, Borr's sons raised lands from the sea, which, according to *Vm.* 21 and *Grm.* 40, was made from Ymir's blood.
- 17 'Middle Enclosure', the world of humans or the enclosure surrounding it. *SnEGylf* (8, p. 12) says that Burr's sons made it from the eyelashes (or eyelids) of Ymir; cf. *Grm.* 41.
- 18 Probably a kenning for the as-yet-unvegetated earth as a home to living things; alternatively, a mythical place-name, *Salarsteinar* 'Hall's Stones'.
- 19 A plant with magical connotations in early runic inscriptions, possibly in connection with fertility.
- 20 The sun and moon are here personified as Sól and Máni, respectively. Cf. *Vm.* 23, where the sun and moon are personified as sister and brother.
- 21 Literally, 'the right hand'. That the personified sun has hands is implicit in *Vm.* 23, where the sun and moon operate the handle which turns the sky each day.
- 22 Or sg. 'sky-horse-deer/beast(?)', a doubtful reading but just possibly a description of the horse(s) that pulled the chariot of the sun, or of the world-tree. If the former, an equivalent solar 'horse' that is also a 'deer' might feature in the Old English metrical charm *Wið dweorh* 'Against a Dwarf'. But for more accessible sense, emend to *um himinjódýr* to *um himinjoður* 'over the sky-rim/horizon'. H has the metrically deficient *of joður*, emended in this edition to *of himinjoður* 'over the sky-rim'.
- 23 The last three lines of this stanza might not be original to the poem, but they are also attributed to it, albeit in variant form, in *SnEGylf* (8, p. 12).
- 24 *Rökstólar*, in which *rök* indicates 'judgement' but also foreshadows the 'doom' of the gods at *ragna rök* (Ragnarok), the heathen Norse apocalypse.
- 25 Cf. *Vm.* 24–5.
- 26 Much of *Vsp.* 7–16 is adapted, with verse quotations, in *SnEGylf* (14, pp. 15–17).
- 27 Here *Æsir* denotes the clan of gods to which Óðinn and Pórr belong, as distinct from the Vanir. The meaning of *Iðavöllr* is uncertain: possibilities include 'Activity Plain', 'Eternal Plain', 'Eddy Plain [i.e., the sea]' and, perhaps most attractively, 'Renewal Plain'; *SnEGylf* (14, p. 15) places it at the centre of Ásgarðr, the divine city.
- 28 Or 'temples high'. The distinction between *høgr* and *hof*, here translated 'altar' and 'temple', is unclear. H has a different line.
- 29 I.e., they played board-games, such as *hnefatafl*. If they did so not just for simple entertainment, their play might have enacted the struggle between gods and giants (cf. *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* chapter 9, st. 55) and been a means of controlling the world's destiny.

- 30 In medieval Iceland, *tún* denoted a cultivated meadow near a farmhouse; in Norway, it meant the 'yard', the space between farm buildings.
- 31 *SnEGylf* (14, p. 15) remarks that the world's golden age was destroyed by the arrival of women from Jötunheimar. Their names are unknown, as are their purpose and actions, though it has been suggested that they stole the gods' gold, or that they introduced avarice to the world, so that the gods craved more than they already had.
- 32 'Giant Homes/Worlds', the realm of giants, the gods' enemies. It is often located in the east, but sometimes (later) in the north.
- 33 Masc./fem. sg.
- 34 I.e., create.
- 35 Or 'which one of the dwarves should create a lord'; **H**'s text means 'which dwarves should create companies', while some manuscripts of *SnEGylf* may be translated 'who (masc./ fem. sg.) should create a company of dwarves' or 'that a company of dwarves should be created'. Emendation to *hvárt skyldi dverga dróttir skepja* would produce 'whether they should create companies of dwarfs'. Dwarves were skilled miners and smiths, so perhaps the gods created them to satisfy a new-found need or craving for gold.
- 36 *Brimir* is probably here a giant-name (an alias of Ymir?) and suggestive of the sea (*brim* 'surf'), his blood then being its waters; where **R** has 'from Brimir's blood', **H** and most manuscripts of *SnEGylf* have 'from bloody surf (*brim*)'. 'Blue limbs' or 'blue legs' is a kenning for 'rocks', but the colour might also suggest necrosis; **H** instead has 'Bláinn's limbs', another kenning for 'rocks', *Bláinn* 'Dark-Blue One' being attested as a dwarf-name, but here perhaps serving as an alias of Ymir.
- 37 Perhaps 'Listless/Apathetic One' or 'Furious Sucker'. **H** has *Móðsognir*.
- 38 Literally, 'was become'.
- 39 Perhaps 'Sleepy One' or 'Door-Keeper'.
- 40 It is unclear whether the 'many man-shapes' are other dwarves—as the subsequent, probably interpolated, lists of names presumably assume—or inert human beings, two of which are discovered and quickened by the gods in *Vsp.* 17 and 18. Another possibility is 'those man-shapes, [those] dwarves, made many things, from the earth, as Durinn said'; their creations might then be neither other dwarves nor humans, but items of metalwork. **H** makes 'dwarves' the object (acc. *dverga*) of creation, and so lacks this uncertainty, but introduces a new doubt about whom *þeir* 'they' refers to, as it could be the gods of the previous stanza, rather than Mótsognir and Durinn. *SnEGylf* (14, p. 16) has another variant reading: *þar mannlíkun morg of gerðusk, / dvergar í jorðu* 'there many man-shapes were created, dwarves in the earth'.
- 41 According to **H** and several manuscripts of *SnEGylf*, they were made in (rather than from) the earth, which is where dwarves were thought to live.
- 42 *SnEGylf* (14, p. 15) says that dwarves took shape as maggots in Ymir's flesh and were given intelligence by the gods. The following lists of dwarf-names are sometimes known collectively as *Dvergatal* 'The Tally of Dwarves'. The meanings of many of the names are disputed, so those presented below are often tentative. There are many differences between **R** and **H** in these lists, some of which are noted below. The names were a prime source for J. R. R. Tolkien's dwarves in *The Hobbit*.
- 43 'Full Moon' and 'Dark Moon'.
- 44 'North and South'.

- 45 'East and West'.
- 46 'All-Thief'.
- 47 Most immediately 'Delayed One', though an original sense 'Inflicter of Madness' has also been proposed.
- 48 Perhaps 'Beaver'.
- 49 'Tubby'.
- 50 'Titch'.
- 51 'Noble Friend'.
- 52 Probably 'Other/Second'.
- 53 'Great-Grandfather'.
- 54 'Mead-Wolf'.
- 55 'Intoxicating Drink'. **H** has *Veggr* 'Wall'.
- 56 'Staff/Spirit-Elf', whence J. R. R. Tolkien's wizard Gandalf.
- 57 'Wind-Elf'.
- 58 'Stubborn' or 'Yearner'.
- 59 'Agreeable'.
- 60 'Darer'.
- 61 'Thriver'.
- 62 'Wise'.
- 63 'Colour'. The second half of this line is metrically irregular.
- 64 'Corpse'.
- 65 'New Counsel'.
- 66 'Powerful One', 'Ruler'. For apparently the same character, see *Rm.* and *Fm.*
- 67 'Counsel-Swift/Wise'.
- 68 Probably 'File'.
- 69 'Wedge'.
- 70 'Finder' or 'Found One'.
- 71 Perhaps 'Needle'.
- 72 'Haft'.
- 73 These two names are combined as *Heptifili* in *SnEGylf* (14, p. 16). **H** has *Hefti*, *Fili*.
- 74 'Skilful One'.
- 75 **H** has *Sviðr* 'Swift' or 'Wise'.
- 76 'Swift'. **H** has *Frór*.
- 77 'Horn-Bearer/Borer'. **H** has *Fornbogi* 'Ancient Bow'.
- 78 'Famous'.
- 79 'Lazy'.
- 80 'Mud-Plain'.
- 81 'Warrior' or 'Muddy'.
- 82 'Oaken-Shield'. This stanza appears to constitute a formerly distinct list.

- 83 This is evidently the start of a third list of dwarf-names.
- 84 Or ‘the offspring/kindred/families of peoples’.
- 85 ‘Praiser’.
- 86 ‘Hall’s Stone’. Cf. ‘hall’s stones’ in *Vsp.* 4; also chapter 12 of *Ynglinga saga*, which tells of a dwarf, a *salvgrðuðr* ‘Hall guardian’, who went into a huge stone at a farm called *Steinn* ‘Stone’ in Sweden.
- 87 *Aurvangar* ‘Mud Plains’. The meaning of *Joruvellir*—compare *Järvall*, a Swedish place-name—is uncertain, but ‘Mud Fields’ and ‘Battlefields’ are possibilities. The dwarves’ journey is otherwise unknown, though *SnEGylf* (14, p. 16) says that the dwarves who lived in stone went from *Svarinshaugr* ‘Svarinn’s Grave-Mound’ to *Aurvangar* at *Joruvellir*.
- 88 ‘Dripper’.
- 89 ‘Enmity Keen’ or ‘Enemy Eager’.
- 90 ‘High One’.
- 91 ‘Gravemound Spur’.
- 92 ‘Lee/Shelter Plain’. **H** has *Hlévargr* ‘Lee Wolf/Outlaw’.
- 93 ‘Glowing One’.
- 94 ‘Joiner’.
- 95 ‘Dyer’.
- 96 Perhaps ‘Crooked Finn/Sámi’.
- 97 The repetition of *Ái* (*Vsp.* 11) points to interpolation.
- 98 ‘Elf’.
- 99 Elsewhere a name of the god Freyr and of kings associated with him.
- 100 *Eikinskjaldi* has already been named in *Vsp.* 13. This is another indication that this part of *Vsp.* comprises originally separate lists.
- 101 Possibly ‘Hider’.
- 102 ‘Frosty’.
- 103 ‘Finn’, ‘Sámi’.
- 104 ‘Deceiver’.
- 105 Or ‘as long as beings continue to live’, or ‘as long as the age lasts’.
- 106 There is a hiatus between this line and the preceding list of dwarf-names. Textual corruption is also indicated by the qualification of masc. *Æsir* by fem. *þríar* ‘three’ in **R** (hence the emendation to *þrír* in the edited text), and suggested by the suspect alliteration which places unexpected emphasis on *því* ‘that’ in a rather short half-line; cf. *Vsp.* **H** 17’s variant reading for the second half-line: *þussa braðr(?)* ‘brothers of giants’. That the first line of st. 17 presents difficulties in both **R** and **H** may well suggest an underlying textual problem.
- 107 Perhaps a metaphor for the inhabited earth; cf. *Vsp.* 4. Alternatively, emend *at húsi* ‘to a house’ to *at húmi* ‘to the sea’.
- 108 Judging from *SnEGylf* (9, p. 13), *á landi*, literally ‘on land’, here means ‘on the shore’; cf. the prose before *Rþ.* 1. *Askr* ‘Ash’ and *Embla* ‘Little Elm’, the first man and woman, were apparently washed up as driftwood.

- 109 It is unclear whether the masc., rather than the expected neut., gender of the adjective *þrluglusa* ‘lacking fate’ is significant. It might indicate that the pair were genderless when discovered, but there are other instances of Old Norse masc. plurals denoting both sexes. Askr’s name implicitly associates him with the world-ash (*askr*) mentioned in *Vsp.* 19. The link with trees is explicit in the variant account of *SnEGylf* (9, p. 13), where the ‘sons of Borr’ created Askr and Embla from two logs (*tré*) which they picked up while walking along the seashore. Cf. *Rþ.*, in which, after walking along a seashore, the god *Heimdallr* ‘(Burgeoning) Home/World-Tree’ comes to a house where he starts to father the estates of men.
- 110 Askr and Embla.
- 111 Óðr ‘mind’, ‘spirit’, ‘voice’ has connotations of mental acuity, ecstasy, emotional force and poetic inspiration.
- 112 I.e., ‘locks of hair’, but the meaning of *lá* is disputed here. Other suggestions are ‘face’, ‘blood’, ‘vital warmth’ and ‘skin’.
- 113 *Læti* can also denote a person’s manner or bearing; the sense ‘movement’ has also been proposed. Another possibility, given the word’s omission from the catalogue in the second half of this stanza, is that it is a synonym for *lá* ‘locks (of hair)’.
- 114 The good colours or complexions (of the living) were possibly distinguished from the bad colours (grey and black) of the dead, but it has also been suggested that the original sense was ‘genitalia’. Additionally, a pun on *litu goða* ‘looks of the gods’ is conceivable.
- 115 The prehistoric Germanic *Wōðanaz (whence ON Óðinn) was arguably ‘Lord of the Wōðu’, the *wōðu* being a frenzied airborne procession of the dead. Here Óðinn’s role is as the literal inspirer of dead wood.
- 116 Hoenir is an obscure god who returns to choose lots in the post-Ragnarok age in *Vsp.* 61. His name perhaps links him with a cockerel (*hani*).
- 117 Lóðurr is an obscure figure. His name is possibly an alias of Loki, who is elsewhere called *Lodr*. Otherwise, Lóðurr might be an obscure fertility god or, if *loð-* is related to *loðinn* ‘woolly, hairy’, perhaps Heimdallr, who fathers the estates of men in *Rþ.* (cf. *Vsp.* 1) and is associated with sheep. According to *Hál.* 8, Óðinn is a friend of Lóðurr. Óðinn, Hoenir and Loki also appear together in *Haust*.
- 118 For a variant list of gifts conferred by Borr’s sons, see *SnEGylf* (9, p. 13).
- 119 A variant version of this stanza, which identifies the tree as *heilagr* ‘holy’, appears in *SnEGylf* (16, p. 19).
- 120 A name for the world-tree (cf. *Vsp.* 2), the original sense of which is uncertain. It may originally have meant ‘Terrible Colossus’, but subsequently been interpreted as ‘Yggr Steed’—referring either to Óðinn (Yggr ‘Terrible One’) as a horse or to the gallows (metaphorically the steed) on which Óðinn was hanged (‘rode’). The tree is also called *askr Yggdrasils* ‘Yggr-steed’s ash tree’ (e.g., *Vsp.* 46, *Grm.* 29), which perhaps imagines it as the post to which Óðinn’s steed was tethered.
- 121 *SnEGylf* (16, p. 19) says that the Nornir take water and mud each day from Urðr’s spring and pour it over the ash-tree, so that its branches do not dry up or rot. It adds that the water is so holy that everything which enters the spring becomes as white as the membrane inside an eggshell. Alternatively, perhaps *Vsp.*’s ‘white/bright mud’ is fertilizing guano or the ‘milk’ of the Milky Way. Cf. *Ls.* 48.

- 122 Honeydew, according to *SnEGylf* (16, p. 19). Ash trees were traditionally associated with honey, a key ingredient of mead, and it has been suggested that the Indo-European world-tree was originally a mead-tree (cf. note to *Vsp.* 2); cf. *Vm.* 14.
- 123 Ordinary ashes are deciduous; it is debatable whether this mythological instance is evergreen. Urðr is one of the three Nornir, supernatural women who govern fate; cf. *Háv.* 111, *Gör.* II 21.
- 124 The *sær* ‘sea’ is alternatively a pool or lake, perhaps identifiable with Urðr’s spring. H and *SnEGylf* (15, p. 18) have *sal* ‘hall’ instead. ON *pollr* originally meant ‘fir’, but came to be used as a synecdoche for ‘tree’, the assumed meaning here.
- 125 Literally, ‘they called one’.
- 126 A close relationship seems likely between the inscribed stick which determines each person’s fate, the concept of humans as scions of Heimdallr, the world-tree (*Vsp.* 1), and the plant-names of the first man and woman (*Vsp.* 17); in addition, men are often described figuratively as trees elsewhere in Old Norse poetry.
- 127 The *Nornir* (perhaps ‘Twiners’ or ‘Secret Communicators’), northern Fates whose names are interpretable as ‘That Which Has Happened’ or ‘Fate’ (cf. ON *urðr*, OE *wyrd*, ‘fate’), ‘That Which Is Happening’ and ‘That Which Shall Happen.’ They are comparable to the Roman Parcae and the Greek Moirai. Cf. *HH.* I 2–4.
- 128 Here the seeress probably refers to herself in the third person.
- 129 Gullveig is an obscure female, perhaps identifiable with the seeress Heiðr of the next stanza, or with the speaker of the poem, or with both. *Gull* means ‘gold’, *veig* ‘intoxicating drink’ or ‘strength’, so many scholars take *Gullveig* to mean ‘Gold Power’, ‘Power of Gold’ or ‘Gold Intoxication’; cf. *Heiðrún* in *Grm.* 25. Who stuck Gullveig on spears is uncertain, but the location probably implicates Óðinn and his associates; H has *studdi* ‘he/she/one stuck’.
- 130 ‘Her’ probably refers to Gullveig. *Hárr* ‘High One’ or ‘One-Eyed One’ is an alias of Óðinn, whose hall is *Valhöll* ‘Hall of the Slain’. An earlier, disyllabic form, **Háars*, is metrically desirable. A reference to Óðinn’s lack of vision might be appropriate here, as his burning of Gullveig not only failed but might have led to the Æsir-Vanir war.
- 131 Gullveig. Cf., in Greek myth, Pallas Athena’s epithet *Tritogeneia* ‘Thrice-Born(?)’ and *Dimetaor* ‘Twice-Born’ Dionysus. Alternatively, translate ‘thrice they burned her, thrice [she was] born’. For reincarnation in Eddic poems, see the concluding prose to *HH.* II 51 and *Sg.* 45.
- 132 *Heiðr* frequently appears in Old Norse prose works as a common noun for a type of sorceress, but here it is often taken to be a proper noun (as in *Hdl.* 32 and several prose texts). Possible meanings include ‘Bright One’ (cf. *heiðr* ‘bright’ and the burning of Gullveig) and ‘Honoured One’ (cf. *heið* ‘honour’ or ‘fee’); *heiðr* ‘heath’ and *heiðinn* ‘heathen’ may be relevant, too. It is unclear whether Heiðr should be identified with Gullveig, with the speaker of *Vsp.*, or with both. Altogether, this stanza raises a bewildering number of questions, to which there are few undisputed answers. Presumably ‘they’ refers to the people whose houses Heiðr visited.
- 133 In Old Norse texts seeresses called *Heiðr* are typically peripatetic and asked to prophesy at feasts.
- 134 The meaning of *velspá* is disputed: either ‘accurate in prophecy’ or ‘of favourable prophecies’. Another possibility is *vélpá* ‘of deceitful prophecies’.

- 135 The precise sense of *vitti hon ganda* is unclear, but the phrase might refer to the beating, or other use, of a *vitt/vítt* ‘drum(?)’ or ‘magical charm(?)’ in order to communicate with *gandir* ‘spirits’ who could reveal hidden information; cf. *Ls.* 24. Alternatively, *gandir* might denote wolves or broomsticks, which Heiðr ‘gave power to’ (*vitti*), and which witches flew upon in a *gandreið* ‘gand-ride’.
- 136 Another problematic passage. This edition takes the manuscript reading *leikiN* to represent *leikin*, a fem. nom. sg. form; cf. the compound *hugleikin* of *Vsp.* H 27.
- 137 The interpretation of the second half of this stanza is uncertain. But however we interpret it, the next stanza makes it clear that Óðinn, leader of the Æsir, goes on the attack.
- 138 The type of projectile Óðinn let fly is not stated, but his typical weapon is the spear. The army is that of the Æsir’s divine opponents, the Vanir.
- 139 *Borðvegr* ‘board-way’ may be a scribal error for *borðveggr* ‘board-wall’, ‘wall made of wooden boards’, the reading of H.
- 140 Or ‘could bestride’.
- 141 *Vsp.* 21–4 appear to describe a war between the Æsir and Vanir. Possibly the Vanir’s *vígspá* ‘battle-spell’ (or ‘holy spell’) had the power to resurrect the dead, which would explain why they were not defeated; ON *spá* may also suggest ‘prophecy’, intimating that these events were fated to occur.
- 142 Variants of *Vsp.* 25 and 26 appear in *SnEGylf* (42, pp. 35–6).
- 143 From now on in *Vsp.*, ‘gods’ presumably refers to the Æsir-Vanir collective which, to judge from other sources, was formed to resolve their conflict. In the last line of this stanza the concern about the goddess Freyja (‘Óðr’s wife’), one of the Vanir, indicates that the tribal war is over.
- 144 Pl. H has sg. *hverr*.
- 145 Perhaps just a poetic way of saying ‘there’s treachery in the air’, but more likely an ominous allusion to a contract, described in *SnEGylf* (42, p. 34), which stipulated that the gods were to give Freyja, the sun and the moon to a giant as payment for his construction work. The use of *læ* ‘guile, treachery, mischief, harm’ might suggest that, as in *SnEGylf*, Loki (alias *Loptr* ‘Airy (One)’) is implicated; cf. *Vsp.* 34 and *Hym.* 37.
- 146 Or ‘Óðr’s girl’. Either way, the woman is Freyja. Little is known of her husband, the god Óðr ‘Inspired Mental Activity’, though his name suggests that he might once have been a double, or an aspect, of Óðinn. *SnEUpp* (26, p. 62) has *óskmey* ‘beloved maiden’ instead.
- 147 I.e., perhaps, to the giants in general. *SnEGylf* (42, pp. 34–36) quotes versions of this stanza and the next, and tells a story to illuminate them. It records how, in violation of oaths, Þórr slew a giant whom the gods had hired to build them a fortification. In *Vsp.*, it might be that the giant was hired to repair the wall which the Vanir had broken during their war with the Æsir.
- 148 H’s reading appears better: *Þórr einn þar vá* ‘Þórr alone struck there’. The name *Þórr* identifies this strong and violent god as originally a personification of thunder, though this aspect of his nature faded in the literature of Iceland, a country where thunder is uncommon.
- 149 Possibly *hljóð* ‘hearing’ actually describes Heimdallr’s ear; if he sacrificed this, his action would parallel Óðinn’s surrender of an eye. But the word can also mean ‘sound’, so another possibility is a reference to Heimdallr’s resounding horn.

- 150 Yggdrasill. The element *heið* in *heiðvanr*—an adjective probably meaning ‘used to light/brightness’, rather than ‘lacking light’—is richly polysemous; it suggests at once the bright sky above the tree, the shining mead below it, the honour conferred upon it, and perhaps the payment of sacrificial offerings. Cf. the name *Heiðr*.
- 151 Cf. the mud sprinkled on the world-tree in *Vsp.* 19. Alternatively, instead of *aurgum* ‘muddy’, possibly *grðgum* ‘flowing’ was intended.
- 152 ‘Valfǫðr’s pledge’ must originally have described Óðinn’s eye, which he placed in Mímir’s spring (see the next stanza), but here it apparently describes the spring in which the eye was placed.
- 153 ‘You’ is pl. The question may also be translated ‘Do you know [enough] yet, or what?’ or ‘Would you know still more, and [if so] what [would you seek to know]?’. Cf. the giantess Hyndla’s questions to Freyja in *Hdl.*
- 154 The seeress seems again to refer to herself in the third person, and to describe an encounter with Óðinn (‘the old one’) that arguably lies behind the recitation of this poem. In Old Norse texts, seeresses are said to ‘sit outside’ at night by crossroads, or in caves or mounds, to gain information from supernatural beings, a practice forbidden in medieval Norwegian law. Here the seeress’s ritual sitting brought forth Óðinn himself.
- 155 An Óðinn-alias related to *Yggr* ‘Terrible One’.
- 156 Or ‘and she looked into his eyes’, though Óðinn has only one left. Cf. *Hym.* 2.
- 157 It is uncertain whether these questions are addressed by the seeress to Óðinn or vice versa. The present punctuation assumes the former.
- 158 Or ‘well of Mímir’. Mímir (cf. Latin *memor* ‘mindful’) is a puzzling figure whose decapitation is described in chapters 4 and 7 of *Ynglinga saga*. It is unclear whether he is one of the giants, as in *SnESkáld* (I, 75, p. 110), or one of the Æsir, as *Ynglinga saga* might suggest. *SnEGylf* (15, p. 17), which quotes a version of this stanza, says that Mímir’s spring contains wisdom and intelligence and that it lies beneath one of Yggdrasill’s roots, the one which extends toward the frost-giants; it goes on to say that Mímir is very wise because he drinks from the spring using the Gjallarhorn, and that Óðinn left one of his eyes in the well as payment for a drink from it. Mímir’s relationship to Mímr (‘Mímr’s head’ in *Vsp.* 45 and *Sd.* 14) is also unclear; judging from their names, they may once have been separate figures, but they seem to have been conflated by the time the myths were written down. Cf. the world-tree *Mínameiðr* in *Fj.* 20.
- 159 Perhaps this revelation proved the profundity of the seeress’s knowledge, after which she received payment from Óðinn for a fuller demonstration.
- 160 *Herfǫðr* ‘Army Father’ is an Óðinn-alias.
- 161 Many editors emend *fē* ‘treasure’ to *fekk* ‘he/she got’.
- 162 Valkyries (*valkyrjur*, literally ‘choosers of the slain’), as imagined in various Eddic poems, are female riders in the service of Óðinn. Their main duties are to enact Óðinn’s will in deciding the course of battles between noblemen and to bring those chosen from among the fallen to Óðinn’s hall. There the newcomers join the *einherjar*, the ‘unique/only champions’ who will fight beside the gods at Ragnarok.
- 163 Or *til Goðþjóðar* ‘to the God Realm’. However, some editors emend *goðþjóðar* to *Gotþjóðar* ‘Gothic people/nation’, which they consider representative of humankind in general.
- 164 *Skuld* is also the name of one of the Nornir in *Vsp.* 20. *SnEGylf* (36, p. 30) appears to identify them as one and the same.

- 165 Perhaps ‘Outstanding One’. She is named earlier, beside Gondul, in *Hák.* 1.
- 166 ‘Battle’.
- 167 ‘Battle’.
- 168 Possibly ‘Staff-Wielder’.
- 169 Possibly ‘Outstanding One with a Spear’ or ‘One with Spear Raised High’. This word also appears in *Hák.* 12, but as an honorific for Skogul, not as a name for a separate valkyrie.
- 170 *Herjann* ‘Army Leader’ is an Óðinn-alias. Norse texts record widely differing numbers of valkyries. Many scholars doubt that the last two lines of this stanza are original to the poem.
- 171 Probably ‘Shining One’; a god, son of Óðinn and Frigg. *SnEGylf* (49, pp. 45–6) calls him *Baldr inn góða* ‘Baldr the good’ and tells how Loki instigated his death. Loki learnt that the mistletoe was the only thing in the world that Frigg had exempted from swearing not to harm Baldr. One day, Loki noticed that the blind god *Höðr* ‘Warrior’, Baldr’s brother, was not participating in the gods’ sport of throwing things at the seemingly invulnerable god. He gave Höðr some mistletoe and guided his aim. As Höðr shot, the harmless sprig turned into a deadly spear, which killed Baldr instantly; see also *BDr.* Book 3 of *GD* tells a different version of Baldr’s death.
- 172 ON *tívurr*, a word found only here, probably means ‘sacrifice’, ‘offering’ (cf. OE *tíber*; Gothic **tibr*); cf. ON *tafn* ‘holy offering’, a term apparently describing either Baldr’s corpse or an aspect of his funeral in *Húsdr.* 10. Another, perhaps less likely, possibility is ‘god’ (cf. ON *tívar* ‘gods’, usual sg. *týr*).
- 173 The hidden fates of Baldr—that is, fates hidden from those other than the seeress—may be both his shocking death and his marvellous resurrection in the post-Ragnarok age.
- 174 *SnEGylf* (49, p. 45) places the mistletoe *fyrir vestan Valhöll* ‘west of Valhöll’.
- 175 Much superstition surrounds the mistletoe in European culture, but many scholars have struggled to reconcile the image of the slender *meiðr* ‘tree/branch’ with the bushy parasite that now bears this name (*Viscum album*). An attractive possibility is that the poet here refers to the plant as it was imagined before a curse, imposed because of the slaying of Baldr, transformed it into a meagre parasite, one condemned to re-enact its crime by piercing upstanding host-plants. Or maybe the poet refers to the mistletoe and the tree on which it lives as a single entity, just as people still talk of ‘mistletoe-trees’. Then again, the poet, or his or her source, may have misdescribed an unfamiliar plant or substituted *mistelteinn* for another plant-name altogether. ON *mistelteinn* ‘mistletoe’ may well be a calque of OE *misteltan*.
- 176 Or ‘branch’, ‘outgrowth’.
- 177 ON *mær* is probably a variant of *mjór* ‘slender’, a word used in the previous stanza.
- 178 More literally, ‘Höðr began to shoot’.
- 179 This brother is unnamed in *Vsp.*, but probably called *Váli* ‘Little Warrior’ or ‘Little Van (i.e., one of the Vanir)’ elsewhere.
- 180 More literally, ‘began to strike’. As Höðr killed his brother Baldr, so it appears Váli kills his brother Höðr; cf. *Hdl.* 29. The boy avenger’s birth is also mentioned in *BDr.* 11, but the only full version of the story to survive appears in the third book of *GD*.

- 181 Perhaps just an indication of extreme youth and single-mindedness, but this behaviour may also reflect an ancient Germanic tribal custom whereby a man who had yet to kill in battle went about unkempt.
- 182 Baldr's funeral is described in *SnEGylf* (49, pp. 46–7).
- 183 Frigg 'Beloved One' is Óðinn's wife and Baldr's mother.
- 184 'Fen Halls', presumably Frigg's abode.
- 185 'Hall of the Slain (*valr*)', more familiar now as 'Valhalla'. This is Óðinn's hall, to which are brought the slaughtered warriors whom he chooses to fight beside him at Ragnarok. See earlier *Eirm.* 1 and *Hák.* 1, 9. Here in *Vsp.* the 'woe of Valhöll' is presumably Baldr's death and its ramifications.
- 186 'Grove of Kettle-Like Hollows' or 'Grove of Hot Springs'; this is not necessarily a proper name.
- 187 Áþekkjan 'like', 'similar to' may pun on *þókk* 'Thanks', the ironic name of a giantess who, alone of all created things, refused to weep for the dead Baldr and thereby condemned him to remain in Hel; *SnEGylf* (49, p. 48) says she was thought to be Loki in disguise. The word may also play ironically on *þekkr* 'agreeable, liked, tractable, obedient'.
- 188 The captive is, in fact, Loki himself (whose name, which probably means essentially 'Blamer', 'Mocker' or 'Resolver', is pronounced 'locky', not 'low-key'). The expression 'like to ... in form' perhaps indicates that punishment has disfigured him. He is also associated with *lae* 'craft, guile, treachery, harm' in other texts; cf. *Vsp.* 25 too.
- 189 Or 'there sits Sigyn, above her man, though not at all well-pleased'.
- 190 Or 'husband'. *Sigyn* 'Victory Friend' is the wife of Loki. His punishment for thwarting Baldr's resurrection is severe. According to *SnEGylf* (50, p. 49), the gods bind him across three stones and the giantess Skaði suspends a snake above him. Sigyn stands by with a basin to catch the venom dripping from the snake's fangs, but when she goes to empty the basin, the venom falls on Loki's face. He then writhes in agony, causing earthquakes. This scene is depicted on the west face of the tenth-century Gosforth Cross from Anglo-Norse Cumbria, but with Sigyn kneeling. It is probably also illustrated on the eighth-century Ardre VIII stone from Gotland.
- 191 'Dire' or 'Scabbard'; cf. *Slíð* in *Grm.* 28 and *Geirvoimul* in *Grm.* 27; additionally, *GD* (1.8.14) mentions a river swirling with weapons. If this stanza once had a second half, it is now lost.
- 192 Probably 'Dark Moons' Plains' or 'Niði's Plain's', *Niði* being a dwarf in *Vsp.* 11; another possibility is 'Kinsmen's Plains'. Cf. *Niðafjöll* in *Vsp.* 63.
- 193 *Sindri* 'Cindery' is probably a dwarf, in which case his kindred are dwarves. In *SnEGylf* (52, p. 53), however, Sindri is a hall for virtuous folk.
- 194 Ostensibly 'Uncold One', but an original **Oflknir* 'Exceedingly Cold One' might be entertained.
- 195 Or 'and it's called Brimir'. *SnEGylf* (52, p. 53) ascribes the name *Brimir* to a heavenly hall for virtuous people at Gimlé. Cf. *Vsp.* 9 and 62.
- 196 Variant versions of *Vsp.* 37–38 appear in *SnEGylf* (52, p. 53).
- 197 The seeress again speaks of herself in the third person, or refers to a spirit she mediates.
- 198 'Corpse Shore'. In *Vsp.* H 34 the noun is pl.
- 199 Or translate as sg.: 'the door faces'.

- 200 Literally ‘heavy currents’. Cf. *Grm.* 21, *Rm.* 3–4.
- 201 I.e., murderous criminals, murderers, who are likened to wolves. Cf. the wolf (*vargr*) which preys on them later in this stanza; cannibalism is not uncommon among wolves.
- 202 Cf. *Háv.* 115. All those suffering in this stanza are probably dead.
- 203 A dragon who reappears in *Vsp.* 63. *Niðhggr* probably means ‘Waning/Dark-Moon Striker’, appropriately as the hall in which it sucks the dead is ‘far from the sun’; alternatively, *Niðhggr* ‘Malicious Striker’—there may be deliberate ambiguity. *SnEGylf* (52, p. 53) says that this monster torments the bodies of the dead in the spring called Hvergelmir. According to *Grm.* 32 and 35, the creature lies beneath the world-tree and gnaws its roots. Cf. the *niðdraca* ‘waning/dark-moon(?) dragon’ of the Old English poem *Beowulf*.
- 204 Alternatively, ‘a wolf’ or ‘a/the thief/criminal’. Whether this *vargr* is distinct from the dragon *Niðhggr* is uncertain; the Gosforth Cross shows a wolf-headed snake.
- 205 Variant versions of *Vsp.* 39 and 40 appear in *SnEGylf* (12, pp. 14–15).
- 206 *Járnviðr* ‘Iron Wood’, which *SnEGylf* (12, p. 14) places east of Miðgarðr. It may be a wooded Dano-German bog, from which bog-ore and iron-hardened bog-wood were extracted. The ‘old one’ is female; *SnEGylf* (12, p. 14) calls her a *gýgr* ‘giantess’ dwelling east of Miðgarðr in the forest called *Járnviðr* where troll-women called *Járnviðjur* live; *SnEGylf* (34, p. 27) perhaps identifies her as the giantess *Angrboða* ‘Grief-Announcer’.
- 207 Or ‘fed’, ‘reared’.
- 208 The reference is to wolves, Fenrir being the most famous wolf of Norse myth; see *Vsp.* 43 and earlier *Hák.* 20 and *Eirm.* 7.
- 209 Or ‘will become’. *SnEUp* (12, p. 22) has *verðr af þeim gllum / íma nǫkkur* ‘from them all comes a certain she-wolf’.
- 210 Or, less likely, another heavenly body.
- 211 A literal translation of *tjúgari*, a user of a *tjúga* ‘pitchfork’. In chapter 10 of *The Waning Sword: Conversion Imagery and Celestial Myth in ‘Beowulf’* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2020), pp. 235–86, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OPB.0190.10>, I suggest that the trollish wielder might be allied to the moon, for which it uses a long fork to take ‘beams’ of light from the sun. Etymologically, though, a *tjúgari* is a ‘drawer’, so here one might alternatively translate ‘drawer (to destruction)’. *SnEUp* (12, p. 22) has a different word: *tregari* ‘causer of grief’.
- 212 Trolls/giants and wolves are closely associated in Norse myth and folklore. *SnEGylf* (12, p. 14) calls this particular monster *Mánagarmr* ‘Moon’s Dog’, and says this mightiest of creatures will swallow *tungl* (i.e., one or more heavenly bodies) and bespatter the sky with blood; it adds that *þaðan týnir sól skíni sínu* ‘as a result the sun will lose its shine’. In *Vsp.* it might be that this creature attacks the sun on behalf of the moon (cf. the lupine attacks on the sun in *Vm.* 46–47 and *Grm.* 39). But the possibility that it is rather the moon that is attacked, and forked from the sky, cannot be discounted; as often in *Vsp.*, there may be deliberate ambiguity. In chapter 10 of *The Waning Sword*, I argue that this stanza’s lupine troll and aged mother might be analogous to Grendel and his mother in *Beowulf*.
- 213 Alternatively, ‘she fills [or ‘will fill’] herself’ or ‘it fills [or ‘will fill’] itself’.
- 214 Probably humans.
- 215 At least some of these may be in the sky.

- 216 H's *verða* gives slightly different sense from R's *var ða*: 'sunshine (literally, pl.) becomes dark'.
- 217 This detail may reflect the sight of volcanic ash falling from a clear Icelandic sky. Alternatively (or additionally), the reference may be to solar eclipses or simply to the vanishing of the sun.
- 218 According to *SnEGylf* (51, p. 49), Ragnarok is preceded by a mighty winter (*fimbulvetr*); see also *Vm*. 44.
- 219 Identity uncertain, but perhaps 'the old one' of *Vsp*. 39, in which case translate 'The giantess's'.
- 220 Eggþér (a giant?) is obscure. His name, which means 'Edge Servant', corresponds to OE *Ecgþeow*, the name of the father of the hero of *Beowulf*.
- 221 Or 'gosling-wood' (perhaps a proper noun). Possibly *gagl-* 'gosling' denotes no more than 'bird' here. Other possibilities are that *gagl* is here a plant-name ('gale') or a word meaning 'towering', and that *gaglvíði* is a scribal error for *gálgvíði* 'gallows tree/wood', the reading of *Vsp*. H 32. This last possibility is attractive as a reference to the world-tree as Óðinn's gallows or to a sacrificial grove.
- 222 Perhaps 'Hider'. The name is otherwise that of a giant and, earlier in *Vsp*., a dwarf.
- 223 'Golden Comb', a cockerel. Cf. *HH*. II 49.
- 224 The hall of the 'Father of Armies', i.e., of Óðinn. His hall is Valhöll.
- 225 *Hel* 'Hidden Place' is here either the goddess of the subterranean land of the dead or that land itself.
- 226 *Garmr*, ostensibly 'Tatter/Rag' but probably really 'Howler', is a mighty dog (*Grm*. 44) or perhaps an alias of the wolf Fenrir; the common noun *garmr* is translatable as 'dog' or 'damager', 'enemy' in a skaldic verse in *SnESkáld* (I, 60, p. 91). *SnEGylf* (51, p. 50) says that Garmr breaks loose at Ragnarok and dies killing the god Týr. Cf. Mánagarmr in *SnEGylf* (12, p. 14). *Gnipahellir* (and its variant *Gníupahellir* in H) means 'Cave with Overhangings', a name unrecorded elsewhere.
- 227 The 'ravener' is Fenrir or Garmr (if different). The gods bound Fenrir with a magical fetter, from which he will escape at Ragnarok; see the prologue to *Ls*. and *SnEGylf* (34, pp. 27–29; 51, p. 50).
- 228 Or 'of the battle-gods'.
- 229 A variant of this stanza appears in *SnEGylf* (51, p. 49); it lacks the final line and has *með hólðum* 'among men', rather than *í heimi* 'in the world'.
- 230 Or 'outlaw-age'.
- 231 Mímr is possibly identical to Mímir (see *Vsp*. 28). The identity of his sons is also uncertain (perhaps giants or men).
- 232 'Horn of (the river) Gjöll'. Instead of *galla* 'resonant', H calls the horn *gamla* 'ancient'.
- 233 Heimdallr, the gods' sentinel, watches and listens for the advance of the giants at Ragnarok, when he blows his horn.
- 234 The last two lines of this stanza and the first two lines of the next find parallel in a single stanza in a quotation from a version of *Vsp*. in *SnEGylf* (51, p. 51). Chapter 4 of *Ynglinga saga* records that the very wise Mímir was sent, along with Hœnir, by the Æsir to the Vanir as a hostage at the end of their war. Dissatisfied with Hœnir, the Vanir decapitated Mímir

and returned his head to the Æsir, whereupon Óðinn embalmed it and recited spells so that it would tell him secret knowledge; cf. *Sd.* 14.

- 235 The ‘giant’ is probably Loki, whom the gods bound after his instigation of the killing of Baldr (*SnEGylf* 50, p. 49; cf. *Vsp.* R 34, *Vsp.* H 30); otherwise, perhaps Hrymr, Surtr, Fenrir, Garmr or Miðgarðsormr.
- 236 These lines might belong to the preceding stanza, but in H, where they appear in reverse order, they are followed by two lines absent from R to form a separate stanza of standard length.
- 237 A variant of this stanza appears in *SnEGylf* (51, p. 51).
- 238 Hrymr, who is probably driving a chariot, is a giant; his name might mean ‘Feeble (from Age)’. *SnEGylf* (51, p. 50) says he steers the ship Naglfar at Ragnarok, whereas it may be Loki who does that in *Vsp.* 49.
- 239 *Jormungandr* ‘Mighty Monstrous-Spirit’ or ‘Enormous Magic-Staff’ is an alias of the *Miðgarðsormr*, the ‘Snake of Miðgarðr’, the world-serpent which, like the wolf Fenrir and the goddess Hel, was the offspring of Loki and the giantess Angrboða. For another *jötunn* ‘(devouring) giant’-snake, see *Fm.* 29.
- 240 ‘Fallow/pale-nosed’ (H has a different reading) might allude to the eagle, as some eagles’ beaks are lighter than their plumage. Cf. *Hræsvelgr* ‘Corpse Swallower’, the eagle-shaped giant whose wings create the winds in *Vm.* 36-7.
- 241 *SnEGylf* (51, pp. 50-1) identifies *Naglfar* (also *Naglfal*) as a ship. It also identifies *Naglfari* as the biggest ship and says it belongs to Muspell (43, p. 36). *Naglfar(i)* ostensibly means ‘Nail(ed) Farer’, though the first element was perhaps originally *nár* ‘corpse’. The possibility that the referent is rather a person, not a ship, is raised by a reference to a character called *Naglfari*, husband of *Nót* ‘Night’, in *SnEGylf* (10, p. 13).
- 242 A variant of this stanza appears in *SnEGylf* (51, p. 51).
- 243 Or ‘The’.
- 244 Possibly *Naglfar(i)*.
- 245 Giants or other evil beings; cf. *Ls.* 42. The name *Muspell* (or *Múspell*) is perhaps that of a fire-giant. Other forms of the word, which scholars have interpreted as meaning roughly ‘end of the world’, occur in Christian apocalyptic contexts in Old High German and Old Saxon texts.
- 246 The ostensible literal sense is ‘the fool’s’, but *fifl* might here rather denote the name of, or a term for, a sea-monster.
- 247 Fenrir or Garmr.
- 248 Býleiptr’s brother is Loki. *Býleiptr*, possibly ‘Farmstead Lightning’, might well be an alias of Óðinn, Loki’s blood-brother; *Vsp.* H 43 has *Býleists*; cf. *Hdl.* 40.
- 249 A variant of this stanza appears in *SnEGylf* (51, p. 51).
- 250 Cf. *Prk.* 7. The alliterative pairing ‘Æsir and elves’ is common in Eddic verse, and finds parallel in an Old English metrical charm, but ‘elves’ play no obvious part in any other Eddic poem except *Vkv.*, in which the smith Völundr is a ‘prince of elves’. Possibly *álfar* ‘elves’ describes, or once described, the Vanir.
- 251 Alternatively, ‘wise ones of the way-rock’, as *Vsp.* H 40 has it, rock being the dwarves’ highway. R’s *veggberg* ‘wall-rock’ may be a poetic term for ‘cliffs’, which collapse in the next stanza.

- 252 *SnEGylf* (4, p. 9) quotes this stanza, as does *SnEGylf* (51, p. 51).
- 253 *Surtr* ‘Black One’ is a fire-giant; cf. *Vm.* 50–51. ‘Destruction of twigs’ is a kenning for ‘fire’, here perhaps stemming from a fiery sword.
- 254 Or ‘the sun of the gods of the slain shines from (his) sword’. The identity of this sword is uncertain, but its implicitly fiery (because solar) nature suggests that it might be wielded by the fire-bearing Surtr. Potentially relevant mythical swords include *Lævateinn* ‘Twig of Treacheries’ (cf. *sviga lævi* in the preceding line), this being a probably radiant weapon plucked from the branches of the world-tree by Loki, who took it to the Underworld, where it was guarded by a giantess, Sinmara, closely related to Surtr (see *Fj.*); the lost sword of the sun-controlling Freyr; and the fiery sword of God on Doomsday in early medieval Christian tradition.
- 255 Or ‘and troll-women stumble’; the translation ‘witches’ for *gífr*, literally ‘greedy ones’, is approximate. These are perhaps allies of Surtr. Alternatively, they might be land-spirits made homeless by the turmoil. *SnEUpp* (7, p. 14) has a different reading: *en guðar hrata* ‘and gods tumble’.
- 256 The road to Hel, land of the dead. See also *Hlr.*
- 257 Variants of *Vsp.* 52–55 appear in *SnEGylf* (51, p. 52).
- 258 *Hlín* ‘Defending/Protecting One’ is perhaps an alias of Óðinn’s wife, Frigg, whose first sorrow would have been Baldr’s death. But *SnEGylf* (35, p. 30) identifies Hlín as a goddess who guards people whom Frigg wants to protect from danger. The name often appears in skaldic kennings for ‘woman’.
- 259 Beli was a giant whose name probably means ‘Bellower’. Freyr, who was without his sword, slew him with a stag’s antler, according to *SnEGylf* (37, p. 31). Earlier, Freyr is similarly ‘Beli’s enemy’ in *Hál.* 3. For Freyr’s death against Surtr at Ragnarok, see *SnEGylf* (51, p. 50).
- 260 Here *Angantýr* ‘Fragrant God’, elsewhere a hero-name (cf. *Hdl.* 9), might be an alias of Óðinn, who is devoured by the wolf at Ragnarok; see *SnEGylf* (51, p. 50) and *Vm.* 53. Another possibility is Freyr. **H** has simply *angan* ‘fragrant one’.
- 261 *Sigfaðir* ‘Victory Father’ is an alias of Óðinn.
- 262 Possibly ‘Spear Lord’ or ‘Wide Ruler’.
- 263 The wolf.
- 264 Or *mundum* ‘with his hands’.
- 265 *Hveðrungr*, perhaps ‘Descendant of Hveðra [a giantess]’ or ‘Roarer’, is a name of Loki; his son is the wolf Fenrir.
- 266 *Hlöðdyn*, a word of uncertain etymology (it perhaps corresponds to *Hladana*, an ancient Germanic goddess of the Rhineland), is a name of Pórr’s mother. She is called *Fjörgyn* ‘Earth’ later in this stanza.
- 267 Pórr.
- 268 Here *úlf* ‘wolf’ could well be a mistake for *orm* ‘snake’, the scribe having repeated *við úlf vega* ‘to fight against the wolf’ from two stanzas earlier. But it is not certainly an error (or at least not definitely a purely mechanical one), as the tenth-century depiction of Ragnarok on the Gosforth Cross includes a wolf-headed snake.
- 269 Or ‘slays’.

- 270 This line is ambiguous. It could mean either 'he [Pórr] strikes Miðgarðr's guardian [or 'encircler'; i.e., the world-serpent] in anger' or 'he/it [the wolf or world-serpent] strikes Miðgarðr's guardian [i.e., Pórr] in anger'; the latter sense is perhaps more immediate, as Pórr is called *Véurr* in *Hym*. Some editors emend acc. sg. *véur* to nom. sg. *véurr* (found in *SnEGylf*), in which case the sense is 'Miðgarðr's guardian strikes him/it in rage'.
- 271 The 'homestead' is presumably the world.
- 272 Pórr. His mother's name, *Fjorgyn*, means 'Earth' or 'Mountain'.
- 273 The meaning of this line is disputed, but a dark (i.e., new) moon might be eclipsing the sun, which turns black in the next stanza. Alternatively, the snake might be 'unapprehensive of hostility (*níðs*)'; deliberate ambiguity is possible.
- 274 This line might be echoed at the start of st. 24 of *Porfinnsdrápa* 'Porfinnr's Poem' by the Icelander Arnórr Þórðarson jarlaskáld (b. after 1012, d. after 1073); *SPSMA II*, 258–59.
- 275 'Life-nourisher' (*aldrnari*) is attested elsewhere as a poetic term for 'fire'. Alternatively, here it might describe the life-sustaining world-tree, which is engulfed in smoke and flame. Again, more than one meaning might be intended.
- 276 Presumably from flames.
- 277 'Fell' in the old sense of 'mountain', here presumably one with stretches of water on its lower slopes.
- 278 Possibly a kenning for the earth-encircling Miðgarðsormr; it might be a proper noun. *Vsp.* H 52 follows this line with one that, probably due to textual corruption, is missing from R: *ok minnask þar á megindóma* 'and there remember great dooms'.
- 279 Or 'ancient secrets'. *Fimbultýr* 'Mighty God' is probably an alias of Óðinn; cf. *Fimbulþulr* in *Háv.* 80, 142.
- 280 Cf. *Vsp.* 8.
- 281 *Hroptir* is an Óðinn-alias of uncertain meaning, perhaps 'Cryptic/Hidden One' or 'Invoker'.
- 282 The text makes sense as it stands, but some editors emend *vel valtívar* 'well, (as) gods of the slain' to *vé valtíva* 'sanctuaries of the gods of the slain'; other possible emendations are *vés valtívar* 'gods of the sanctuary' and *vel veltívar* 'well, (as) benign gods'; cf. *Vsp.* H 54.
- 283 Or 'sacrificial blood twig'; *hlaut-* (*hlut-* in *Vsp.* H 55) denotes primarily a lot used in augury, secondarily the sacrificial blood used. Either way, Hœnir divines the future. Cf. *Hym.* 1.
- 284 The identity of the two brothers (or 'the brothers of Tveggi [=Óðinn]?) is unclear, but they could well be Hǫðr and Baldr. Their sons (a new generation of gods or men?) are also obscure.
- 285 Presumably a description of the expansive new world.
- 286 A variant of this stanza appears in *SnEGylf* (17, p. 20); it describes the hall as *gulli betra* 'better than gold', rather than *gulli þakðan* 'thatched with gold'.
- 287 *SnEGylf* (52, p. 53) says that, after Ragnarok, *Gimlé* 'Fire/Gem Lee' will be the best place in heaven, where there will be fine drink for those in the hall called Brimir. Righteous people will dwell in it and in a hall called Sindri; cf. *Vsp.* 36.
- 288 I.e., groups of people.
- 289 I.e., dimly shining.
- 290 'Waning/Dark Moons' Mountains' or 'Niði's Mountains', Niði being a dwarf in *Vsp.* 11, or 'Kinsmen's Mountains'. More than one sense might apply. Cf. Niðavellir in *Vsp.* 36.

- 291 Or ‘in his feathers’.
- 292 If, at the start of this stanza, *þar* ‘there’ (absent from *Vsp. H* 58) refers to Gimlé, it is uncertain why the dragon should carry corpses, presumably from Náströnd (*Vsp.* 37–38), to this happy hall; but perhaps, following their torture, implicitly in the depths, the dead are now deemed fit for resurrection and to join the virtuous in a new life of bliss.
- 293 Norse seeresses reportedly sat on high-seats or platforms while performing, but this one’s sinking at the end of her recitation might also (or alternatively) indicate a mental collapse as she withdraws from a trance-like state. Another possibility, entertained by scholars who believe that Óðinn had wakened the seeress from the dead, is that she sinks back into her grave. Cf. *Vsp.* 2, *Ls.* 24, *Grp.* 22.

Hávamál

Hávamál (*Hav.*) ‘The Sayings of Hávi’ survives only in R (fol. 3r–7v) and derivative post-medieval paper manuscripts. Its first stanza is also quoted in *SnEGylf*. Additionally, the second half of stanza 84 appears in *Fóstbraeðra saga* ‘The Saga of the Sworn Brothers’, a work dated c. 1260.

At 164 stanzas, *Hav.* is much the longest poem in R. It is also its most intractable, while at the same time being one of its most fascinating. Written in a variety of metres, but mainly *ljóðaháttir*, it appears to be a collection of poems, or stanza-sequences, that have been brought into loose unity by a compiler, though none of these putative contributing poems or sequences survives elsewhere and the divisions between them are not always clear. A recurring theme, however, is the impartation of wisdom through the words of the god Óðinn (alias *Hávi*), or his human representative. The listener learns especially what a lone man needs to know in a dangerous world, and how he should behave in relation to friends, strangers, the perilous attraction of women and the inevitability of death. Another unifying thread concerns relations between visitors and hosts, a theme evident in several mythic narratives about Óðinn’s dealings with giants.

Parts of *Hav.* may well have become disordered or lost in the course of transmission, and some stanzas are probably interpolations or the creations of a late compiler. In any event, it is unlikely that we simply have several once-separate poems in a pristine state strung together end-to-end; rather, as one scholar observes, ‘we can glimpse the half-submerged hulks of such poems’.¹ The full extent of any disorder or interpolation cannot be determined, though, and scholarly opinions vary. Indeed, at one extreme, at least one interpreter maintains that *Hav.* ‘is a coherent poem’ as it stands.² The same scholar observes that ‘wisdom poetry has no prescribed form’, and that *Hav.* ‘is not linear in its progression; rather, it takes up a theme, examines it, drops it to turn to another, then picks up the original theme in a variation’. This is true, but there are, nonetheless, jarring disjunctions at stanzas 80 and 111–12, and many puzzling passages, transitions and metrical variations elsewhere, which together strongly suggest corruption, lacunae, interpolation or the rough yoking together of formerly separate poetic entities. As

1 D. A. H. Evans, ed., *Hávamál* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1986), p. 8.

2 C. Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense: Gnomic Theme and Style in Old Icelandic and Old English Wisdom Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 65.

another scholar, who thinks the poem ‘incoherent’, says, ‘it is inconceivable that these 164 strophes were originally composed as one poem’.³

Háv.’s composite nature, together with its many problems of sense and arrangement, has sparked much discussion about the ‘original’ form of the poem(s), with a bewildering number of opinions being voiced, and numerous rearrangements and reconstructions proposed. The degree of subjectivity and the number of assumptions inevitable in reconstructions of a precursor of a text that is probably at least partly oral in origin, and that survives in only one manuscript, mean that little agreement has been reached. However, John McKinnell has made a persuasive case for discerning four ‘original’ poems—all in *Ljóðaháttir*—of various dates, which were disrupted by interpolations in the course of transmission and combined by an editor at a fairly late date. He identifies these four originals as follows (see also the synopsis):

- A. The Gnostic Poem (roughly stanzas 1–79)
- B. The Poem of Sexual Intrigue (stanzas 84; 91–110)
- C. *Loddfáfnismál* (stanzas 111, lines 4–8 and 11; 112–36)
- D. An anthology comprising part of *Rúnatal* and most of *Ljóðatal* (stanzas 138–41; 146–61; 162, lines 1–3; 163)

The date and place of *Háv.*’s composition are uncertain. Scholars’ opinions differ widely, ranging from essentially early (tenth century or before), genuinely heathen and Norwegian, to essentially late (twelfth or thirteenth century), pseudo-heathen and Icelandic—and one’s view on this matter determines the extent to which one deems *Háv.* an oral poem or the work of a monastic scriptorium. Of course, different parts of the poem may very well have originated at different times and in different places (stanza 129 shows Irish influence), and some passages may have been altered in the course of transmission. Happily, there are clues to the origins of parts of the poem, but we cannot determine when these parts first came together.

SnEGylf’s prominent quotation of stanza 1 may well indicate that *Háv.*, or at least its first part, existed in some form by about 1220; and a likely echo of st. 164 toward the end of *SnEGylf* hints that Snorri knew more of the poem. Internal evidence points to a much earlier date for at least some parts. References to *bautarsteinar* ‘memorial stones’ (72), cremation (81) and a reindeer on a mountain (90), among other things, together with linguistic evidence and a complete absence of Icelandic colour, make pre-Christian Norway a likely home for oral versions of the first two sections described above. Such a date is supported by the appearance of the first lines of stt. 76–77 in Eyvindr Finnsson skáldaspillir’s *Hák*. Eyvindr’s reputation as a *skáldaspillir* ‘plagiarist(?)’ means that he may well have echoed *Háv.*, in which case these two stanzas—and conceivably the rest of the ‘Gnostic Poem’—would have existed by c. 960 when Eyvindr composed his

³ Evans, *Hávamál*, p. 7.

poem. The self-centred ethos of the ‘Gnomic Poem’ and the absence of references to the Christian God also suggest an early date.

John McKinnell has marshalled metrical and linguistic evidence that points to a tenth-century heathen origin for the twelve narrative stanzas (*Háv.* 96–101; 104–9) of his reconstructed ‘Poem of Sexual Intrigue’.⁴ But he thinks the non-narrative stanzas of this ‘thoroughly urbane’ section probably have cultural links to twelfth-century Iceland.

The overtly pagan religious character of the later parts of *Háv.*, notably Óðinn’s self-sacrifice by hanging on a tree (*Háv.* 138–39), also favour an early date. For all its apparent correspondences to the Crucifixion of Christ, this myth is almost certainly heathen; it informs skaldic kennings and may well help to explain the best-known name of the world-tree, *Yggdrasil*. *Háv.*’s roots in native pagan tradition are also apparent from its references to the story of Óðinn’s acquisition of the mead of poetry (*Háv.* 13–14, 104–10), which appears in variant form in *SnEskáld*, informs skaldic kennings, and broadly parallels the god Indra’s theft of the sacred *soma* in ancient Indian mythology.

But even if *Háv.* displays knowledge of heathen Norse myths, and if most of the supposed Christian or foreign sources that scholars have proposed appear largely unconvincing (due to the universality of much of the advice offered), there remains the possibility that parts of the text were remoulded or even invented by a late Christian antiquarian. If they were, we might broadly compare the vivid description of a heathen temple in chapter 4 of *Eyrbyggja saga* ‘The Saga of the Dwellers of Eyr [in Iceland]’, an Old Norse work composed in the thirteenth century, when Iceland had been Christian for over two hundred years.

All we can safely say is that the basis of much of *Háv.*’s content appears purely heathen—and that at least the ‘Gnomic Poem’ and *Rúnatal* probably are. This impression is supported by the poem’s many difficulties and obscurities, and its total lack of reference to Christian beliefs and morals. But the poem’s realization in manuscript form obviously means that one or more people working in Christian Iceland had a hand in it, even if only to collect, assemble and transcribe.

Wherever and whenever *Háv.* derives from, its present position in R is not accidental. Although palaeographical and linguistic evidence indicates that *Háv.*, like *Alv.*, need not have been incorporated into the putative anthology that lies behind the mythological section of R until comparatively late, the poem continues the theme of Óðinn’s search for wisdom, perhaps specifically from the giants, evident in *Vsp.* 1–2, 28. More obviously, by indicating Óðinn’s knowledge and showing how he obtained it, *Háv.* introduces the next two poems, which may also be classed broadly as wisdom-verse. In *Vm.* Óðinn defeats a wise giant in a battle of knowledge. In *Grm.* he imparts wisdom and long-lasting rule to Agnarr, a young man who—unlike the witnesses to

⁴ J. McKinnell, ‘*Hávamál B: A Poem of Sexual Intrigue*’, *Saga-Book* 29 (2005), 83–114.

Óðinn's ordeal on the windswept tree in *Háv.* 138—refreshes him during his torture by Agnarr's father, a man with the giant-like name of Geirrǫðr who is too stupid to recognize his god and too ready to violate the custom of hospitality required by *Háv.* 2–4, 132.

Synopsis

On the basis of sense, metre and the initials to stanzas 1, 111 and 138 in **R**, the following sections can be discerned in *Háv.*:

1. Stt. 1–77 (or 79), which scholars sometimes call the 'Gnostic Poem'. These stanzas, many of them paired thematically and linguistically, and almost all composed in *ljóðaháttir*, offer largely commonsense advice and have been described as 'essentially a guide to survival in the Viking-Age world, aimed at the small farmer'.⁵ They are spoken at least partly by Óðinn (13–14) and their focus is secular, with an emphasis on pragmatic self-interest, wariness and moderation in everyday human affairs. A man should, for example, stay alert when visiting strangers, beware of excessive drunkenness, ask discerning questions, be reserved of speech (but not to the point of appearing stupid), give generously (sometimes), cherish friends, travel armed, avoid both foolishness and excessive learning, appreciate that nobody is completely useless, and strive to gain a lasting posthumous reputation. Stt. 13–14 record a version of the myth of Óðinn's acquisition of the mead of poetry from the giantess Gunnlǫð (cf. 104–10), but put to mundane use as a warning against excessive drinking.
2. Next, after a seemingly isolated—perhaps misplaced or interpolated—and metrically irregular strophe about the divine creation of runes (80), come ten stanzas (81–90), mainly in *málaháttir*. They are mostly on the theme of the untrustworthiness of nature and of certain objects and people, notably women.
3. *Háv.* reverts to *ljóðaháttir* in st. 91, where Óðinn continues the theme of fickleness in sexual relations by observing that men are also untrustworthy. He then illustrates in stt. 92–102 how lust for a woman can make a fool of any man by telling a story of his deception by the teasing daughter (or wife) of Billingr (perhaps a giant).
4. St. 103, about the need for a man to have good things to say, perhaps serves as a none-too-smooth link to Óðinn's account in stt. 104–10 of how he acquired the mead of poetry from Gunnlǫð (variants of this version of the myth

⁵ T. Gunnell, 'Eddic Poetry', in R. McTurk, ed., *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 82–100 at 85, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996867.ch6>

survive in stt. 13–14 and *SnESkáld*). This tale showing Óðinn’s successful sexual deception of a woman counterbalances his deception by Billingr’s daughter (or wife). The identity of the speaker of st. 110, which censures Óðinn for perjury and theft, is unclear.

5. Stt. 111–37 are often known as *Loddfáfnismál* ‘The Sayings of/for Loddfáfnir’. An unnamed speaker—possibly Óðinn or the poet as Óðinn’s representative—says he heard people discussing ‘runes’ (secrets or runic letters) and exchanging counsels in the hall of Hávi, and grandly announces that it is time to repeat their words ‘from the sage’s seat at the spring of Urðr [one of the Nornir]’. He addresses someone called Loddfáfnir in stanzas (mainly of *ljóðaháttir* and *galdralag*) mostly comprising the words ‘I counsel you, Loddfáfnir, and you should take my counsels; you’ll profit if you take them, they’ll be good for you if you get them’, followed by guidance on miscellaneous topics, some of it curiously mundane, perhaps even consciously bathetic. There are, for instance, injunctions not to get up at night unless you are on watch or needing to pee, not to sleep with other men’s wives, and not to mock beggars or old men; tips on friendship and seduction; and, finally, a list of remedies.
6. Stt. 138–45 form a metrically varied section, often called *Rúnatal* ‘The Tally of Runes’. Here *Háv.* acquires an obscure, religious quality as Óðinn, perhaps following on from the reference to ‘runes’ in stanza 111, describes how he ‘picked up runes’ after hanging for nine days on a tree, ‘wounded by a spear and given to Óðinn, myself to myself’; how (during this ordeal?) he ‘learnt nine mighty songs from the famous son of Bólþórr’; and how he got a draught of the mead of poetry, thereby becoming eloquent and productive—the poem’s third account of how Óðinn obtained this drink. This section concludes with four stanzas focused on the carving and colouring of runic letters, especially by Óðinn (alias *Fimbulþulr/Hroptr/Pundr*), but which also allude to sacrificial rites. These four stanzas, if not interpolated, may also be spoken by Óðinn (or his human avatar); if it is Óðinn speaking, he refers to himself in the first person, perhaps because he recites traditional lore of which his actions are part.
7. Stt. 146–63, nowadays often called *Ljóðatal* ‘The Tally of Magical Songs’, form a numbered list of the effects of eighteen (not nine) magical songs, presumably spoken by Óðinn and apparently addressed to Loddfáfnir (162). They are for purposes such as healing illnesses, protecting allies, defeating enemies, calming the wind, extinguishing fires, seducing women, thwarting evil females and resurrecting the dead. But the actual words of the incantations are given neither to Loddfáfnir nor to us.

8. *Háv.* ends in *galdralag* with a framing stanza (164), perhaps composed by the poem's compiler. It revives the image of the speaker in a hall from st. 2 and, by referring to *Háva mál* 'sayings of Hávi', links back to the reference to the speech of men in Hávi's hall in st. 111. This reference presumably gives the poem its name.

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Hávamál

1. Gáttir allar áðr gangi fram
um skoðask skyli,
um skygnask skyli;
þvíat óvist er at vita hvar óvinir
sitja á fleti fyrir.
2. 'Gefendr heilir!' Gestr er inn kominn.
Hvar skal sitja sjá?
Mjök er bráðr, sá er á bröndum skal
síns um freista frama.
3. Elds er þorfr þeims inn er kominn
ok á kné kalinn;
matar ok váða er manni þorfr,
þeim er hefir um fjall farit.
4. Vatns er þorfr þeim er til verðar kómr,
þerru ok þjóðlaðar,
góðs um œðis, ef sér geta mætti,
orðs ok endrþøgu.
5. Vits er þorfr þeim er viða ratar;
dælt er heima hvat;
at augabragði verðr sá er ekki kann
ok með snotrum sitr.
6. At hyggjandi sinni skylit maðr hroesinn vera,
heldr gætinn at geði;
þá er horskr ok þogull kómr heimisgarða til,
sjaldan verðr víti vørum;
þvíat óbrigðra vin fær maðr aldregi
en manvit mikit.
7. Inn vari gestr, er til verðar kómr,
þunnu hljóði þegir,
eyrum hlýðir en augum skoðar;
svá nýskirk fróðra hverr fyrir.
8. Hinn er sæll er sér um getr
lof ok líknstafi;
ódælla er við þat er maðr eiga skal
annars brjóstum í.

The Sayings of Hávi¹

1. Before advancing through all doorways,
one must look around,
one must peer around;
for one never knows for certain where enemies
are sitting on the boards.²
2. 'Hail to the givers!'³ A guest has come in.⁴
Where shall he sit?
He's very anxious,⁵ the one who has
to test his fortune on the firewood.⁶
3. Fire is required for the one who has come in
and is chilled at the knee;
food and clothes are required for the man
who has travelled over mountains.
4. Water is required for the one who comes to a meal,
a towel and a warm invitation,
a good disposition,⁷ if he can get it,
conversation and silence in return.⁸
5. Wits are required by the one who wanders widely;
everything is easy at home;
he who knows nothing and sits among the wise
becomes the subject of winking.⁹
6. One shouldn't be boastful of one's brains,
but rather be reserved of mind;
when a wise and reticent man comes to homesteads,
misfortune seldom befalls the wary;¹⁰
for one never gets a more unfailing friend
than great common sense.¹¹
7. The cautious guest, when he comes to a meal,
is silent with strained hearing;
he listens with his ears and looks with his eyes;
so every wise man spies things out before himself.
8. Happy is that one who earns himself
praise and kindness-staves;¹²
it's less easy to deal with what one has to own
in the heart of another.¹³

9. Sá er saell er sjálfr um á
lof ok vit meðan lifir;
þvíat ill ráð hefir maðr opt þegit
annars brjóstum ór.
10. Byrði betri berrat maðr brautu at
en sé manvit mikit;
auði betra þíkkir þat í ókunnum stað;
slíkt er válaðs vera.
11. Byrði betri berrat maðr brautu at
en sé manvit mikit;
vegnest verra vegra hann velli at
en sé ofdrykkja qls.
12. Era svá gott sem gott kveða,
ql, alda sonum;
þvíat færa veit er fleira drekkr,
síns til geðs gumi.
13. Óminnishegri heitir sá er yfir qlörum þrumir,
hann stelr geði guma;
þess fugls fjöldum ek fjótraðr vark
í garði Gunnlaðar.
14. Qlr ek varð, varð ofrölvi,
at ins fróða Fjalars;
því er qlör bæzt at aprt of heimtir
hverr sitt geð gumi.
15. Þagalt ok hugalt skyli þjóðans barn
ok vígdjarft vera;
glaðr ok reifr skyli gumna hvern,
unz sinn bíðr bana.
16. Ósnjallr maðr hyggsk munu ey lifa,
ef hann við víg varask;
en elli gefr honum engi frið,
þótt honum geirar gefi.
17. Kópir afglapi er til kynnis kœmr;
þylsk hann um eða þrumir;
allt er senn ef hann sylg um getr,
uppi er þá geð guma.

9. Happy is he who himself possesses
acclaim and intelligence while he lives;
for a man has often had bad advice
from another's breast.
10. One doesn't bear a better burden on the road
than great common sense;
better than wealth it seems in a strange place;
such is a poor man's means of existence.¹⁴
11. One doesn't bear a better burden on the road
than great common sense;
one can't carry worse provisions through the country¹⁵
than overindulgence in ale.
12. It's not as good as they say it's good,
ale, for the sons of men;
for the more a man drinks,
the less he knows his mind.
13. It's called the heron of oblivion,¹⁶ the one that stands quietly¹⁷
over ale-feasts,¹⁸
it steals a man's wits;¹⁹
with this bird's feathers²⁰ I was fettered²¹
in the court²² of Gunnlǫð.²³
14. I got drunk, got extremely drunk,
at the house of wise Fjalarr,²⁴
in that case²⁵ the best ale-feast is one where each man
gets his faculties back.²⁶
15. A ruler's child must be reserved and thoughtful
and brave in battle;
every man must be merry and cheerful
until he meets his death.
16. A foolish²⁷ man thinks he will live forever,
if he bewares of²⁸ battle;
but old age will give him no peace,
even if spears give it to him.
17. A fool stares when he comes to a friend's house;
he mumbles to himself or stays silent;
all at once, if he gets a swig,
the man's wits are gone.²⁹

18. Sá einn veit er víða ratar
ok hefir fjolð um farit,
hverju geði stýrir gumna hvern;
sá er vitandi vits.
19. Haldit maðr á keri, drekki þó at hófi mjóð;
mæli þarf eða þegi;
ókynnis þess vár þik engi maðr,
at þú gangir snemma at sofa.
20. Gráðugr halr, nema geðs viti,
etr sér aldrtrega;
opt fær hlægis, er með horskum kómri,
manni heimskum magi.
21. Hjarðir þat vitu, nær þeir heim skulu,
ok ganga þá af grasi;
en ósviðr maðr kann ævagi
síns um mál maga.
22. Vesall maðr ok illa skapi
hlær at hvívetna;
hittki hann veit er hann vita þyrfti,
at hann era vamma vanr.
23. Ósviðr maðr vakir um allar nætr
ok hyggr at hvívetna;
þá er móðr er at morni kómri,
allt er víl, sem var.
24. Ósnotr maðr hyggr sér alla vera
viðhlæjendr vini;
hittki hann fiðr, þótt þeir um hann fár lesi,
ef hann með snotrum sitr.
25. Ósnotr maðr hyggr sér alla vera
viðhlæjendr vini;
þá þat finnr er at þingi kómri
at hann á formælendr fá.
26. Ósnotr maðr þikkisk allt vita,
ef hann á sér í vá veru;
hittki hann veit, hvat hann skal við kveða,
ef hans freista firar.

18. Only the one who wanders widely
and has journeyed much
knows what disposition commands each man;
he's knowing about the mind.
19. One mustn't hog the bowl, but drink mead in moderation,³⁰
let one say something useful or be silent;
nobody will blame you for such bad manners,
if you go to bed early.
20. A greedy man, unless he knows his inclination,
eats himself into life-sorrow;
the stomach often brings scorn on a foolish man,
when he comes among the wise.
21. Herds know it, when they must go home,
and then go from the grass,³¹
but a foolish man never knows
the measure of his maw.³²
22. A wretched man and one of wicked character³³
laughs at everything;
he doesn't know what he needed to know,
that he's not short of faults.
23. A foolish man stays awake through all nights
and thinks about everything;
then he's exhausted when morning arrives,
[and] all his trouble is as it was.
24. A foolish man thinks all who laugh with him
are his friends;
he doesn't notice, though they speak ill of him,
if he sits among the wise.
25. A foolish man thinks all who laugh with him
are his friends;
then he finds it [out] when he comes to the assembly³⁴
that he has few speakers on his behalf.
26. A foolish man thinks he knows it all,
if he has a safe spot for himself in a corner,³⁵
he doesn't know this — what he must say in response,
if people put him to the test.

27. Ósnotr maðr, er með aldir kœmr,
 þat er bæzt at hann þegi;
 engi þat veit at hann ekki kann,
 nema hann mæli til mart;
 veita maðr, hinn er vætki veit,
 þótt hann mæli til mart.
28. Fróðr sá þykkisk er fregna kann
 ok segja it sama;
 eyvitu leyna megu ýta synir,
 því er gengr um guma.
29. Ærna mælir, sá er æva þegir,
 staðlausu stafi;
 hraðmælt tunga, nema haldendr eigi,
 opt sér ógott um gelr.
30. At augabragði skala maðr annan hafa,
 þótt til kynnis komi;
 margr þá fróðr þíkkisk ef hann freginn erat
 ok nái hann þurrfjallr þruma.
31. Fróðr þíkkisk, sá er flóttu tekr,
 gestr at gest hæðinn;
 veita górla, sá er um verði glissir,
 þótt hann með grømum glami.
32. Gumnar margir erusk gagnholrir,
 en at vírði vrekask;
 aldar róg þat mun æ vera,
 órir gestr við gest.
33. Árliga verðar skyli maðr opt fá,
 nema til kynnis komi;
 sitr ok snópir, lætr sem sólginn sé,
 ok kann fregna at fá.
34. Afhvarf mikit er til ills vinar,
 þótt á brautu búi;
 en til góðs vinar liggja gagnvegir,
 þótt hann sé firr farinn.
35. Ganga skal, skala gestr vera
 ey í einum stað;
 ljúfr verðr leiðr ef lengi sitr
 annars fletjum á.

27. When a foolish man comes among men,
it's best that he keep quiet;
no one will know that he knows nothing,
unless he talks too much;
the man who knows nothing doesn't even know
when he talks too much.
28. He who can ask and also answer
is considered wise;
the sons of men can conceal nothing
of what goes around men.³⁶
29. He who is never silent speaks too many
staves of senselessness,³⁷
a fast-talking tongue, unless it has guards,³⁸
often invokes no good for itself.
30. One shouldn't make mock of another³⁹
when one visits an acquaintance;
many [a man] may then seem wise if he isn't questioned
and he manages to sit quietly with his skin dry.⁴⁰
31. A guest scornful of a [fellow] guest
is thought wise — [that is,] the one who [in this situation]
takes flight;⁴¹
the one who's sneering at a meal can't be sure
whether he's scoffing among enemies.
32. Many men are entirely friendly⁴² towards each other,
but abuse one another at a feast;⁴³
there will always be strife among men,⁴⁴
guest will fall out with guest.
33. One should often have one's meal early,
unless one visits an acquaintance,⁴⁵
[otherwise] one sits and craves food restlessly, acts as if famished,
and can ask about few things.
34. It's a very roundabout route to a bad friend's house,
even if he lives on your way;
but straight roads lead to a good friend,
even if he's gone further away.⁴⁶
35. One must go, not always be
a guest in one place;
a loved man becomes loathed if he stays for long
on the floor of another.

36. Bú er betra, þótt lítit sé;
 halr er heima hverr;
 þótt tvær geitr eigi ok taugreptan sal,
 þat er þó betra en bæn.
37. Bú er betra, þótt lítit sé,
 halr er heima hverr;
 blóðugt er hjarta þeim er biðja skal
 sér í mál hvert matar.
38. Vápnum sínum skala maðr velli á
 feti ganga framarr;
 þvíat óvist er at vita nær verðr á vegum úti
 geirs um þorff guma.
39. Fannka ek mildan mann eða svá matargóðan
 at ei væri þiggja þegit,
 eða síns fjár svá gjöflan
 at leið sé laun, ef þegi.
40. Fjár síns, er fengit hefr,
 skylit maðr þorff þola;
 opt sparir leiðum þats hefir ljúfum hugat,
 mart gengr verr en varir.
41. Vápnum ok váðum skulu vinir gleðjask;
 þat er á sjálfum sýnst;
 viðrgefendr ok endrgefendr erusk lengst vinir,
 ef þat biðr at verða vel.
42. Vin sínum skal maðr vinr vera
 ok gjalda gjof við gjof;
 hlátr við hlátri skyli hólðar taka,
 en lausung við lygi.
43. Vin sínum skal maðr vinr vera,
 þeim ok þess vin,
 en óvinar síns skyli engi maðr
 vinar vinr vera.
44. Veiztu, ef þú vin átt, þann er þú vel trúir,
 ok vill þú af honum gott geta,
 geði skaltu við þann blanda ok gjófum skipta,
 fara at finna opt.

36. A farmstead is better, even if it's little;⁴⁷
everyone's a free man at home;
even if one has [only] two goats and a rope-raftered⁴⁸ hall,
that's still better than begging.
37. A farmstead is better, even if it's little;⁴⁹
everyone's a freeman at home;
bloody is the heart of the one who must beg
for his food at every meal.
38. One mustn't go a foot from
one's weapons in the field;
for, out on the roads, a man never knows for certain
when he'll have need of his spear.
39. I haven't encountered a man so kind or generous with food
that to accept was not [to be reckoned as having] accepted,⁵⁰
or so liberal with his wealth
that a reward would be loathed, if he could receive one.
40. Of his wealth, when he has acquired it,
a man shouldn't endure need;⁵¹
often one saves for the loathed what's meant for the loved;
many things turn out worse than one expects.
41. With weapons and apparel friends should gladden each other;
that's most evident on themselves;⁵²
givers in return and repeat givers are friends longest,
if it lasts long enough to turn out well.
42. One should be a friend to one's friend,
and repay gift with gift;
men should requite laughter with laughter,⁵³
and lying with a lie.
43. One should be a friend to one's friend,
to him and to his friend;
but no one should be a friend
of his enemy's friend.
44. Know that if you have a friend whom you trust well,
and you want to get good from him,
you must mingle your mind with his and exchange gifts,
go to see him often.

45. Ef þú átt annan, þanns þú illa trúir,
 vildu af honum þó gott geta,
 fagrt skaltu við þann mæla en flátt hyggja,
 ok gjalda lausung við lygi.
46. Þat er enn of þann er þú illa trúir
 ok þér er grunr at hans geði:
 hlæja skaltu við þeim ok um hug mæla;
 glík skulu gjöld gjöfum.
47. Ungr var ek forðum, fór ek einn saman,
 þá varð ek villr vega;
 auðigr þóttumsk er ek annan fann;
 maðr er manns gaman.
48. Mildir, frœknir menn bæzt lifa,
 sjaldan sút ala;
 en ósnjallr maðr uggir hotvetna,
 sýtir æ glöggr við gjöfum.
49. Váðir mínar gaf ek velli at
 tveim trémönnum;
 rekkar þat þóttusk er þeir ript hofðu,
 neiss er nøkkvið halr.
50. Hrørnar þoll, sú er stendr þorpi á,
 hlýrat henni borkr né barr;
 svá er maðr, sá er mangi ann:
 hvat skal hann lengi lifa?
51. Eldi heitari brennr með illum vinum,
 friðr fimm daga,
 en þá sloknar er inn sétti kómr,
 ok versnar allr vinskapr.
52. Mikit eitt skala manni gefa,
 opt kaupir sér í litlu lof;
 með hálfum hleif ok með höllu keri
 fekk ek mér félaga.
53. Lítilla sanda, lítilla sæva,
 lítil eru geð guma;
 því allir menn urðut jafnspakir,
 hálf er qold hvár.

45. If you have another, whom you mistrust,
 yet you want to get good from him,
you must speak fair with him but think false,
 and repay lying with a lie.
46. That's also the case with the one whom you mistrust
 and whose disposition you suspect:
you must laugh with him and mince the truth;⁵⁴
 there should be like repayment for gifts.
47. I was young once, I travelled alone,
 then I was astray on the roads;⁵⁵
I thought myself rich when I met another;
 man is man's delight.⁵⁶
48. Generous, brave men live best,
 they seldom nurse sorrow;
but a foolish man fears everything,
 a niggard is always nervous about gifts.
49. Out in the country,⁵⁷ I⁵⁸ gave my clothes
 to two tree-men;⁵⁹
they thought themselves champions⁶⁰ when they had fine clothing;
 a naked man is shamed.
50. The fir-tree that stands in a farmstead withers,
 neither bark nor needles protect it;⁶¹
so it is with the man whom no one loves:
 how is he to live for long?
51. Love burns hotter than fire for five days
 among false friends,
but then dies down when the sixth comes,
 and all friendship worsens.
52. One shouldn't give a man only great⁶² things,
 one can often buy oneself love⁶³ with little;
 with half a loaf and with a tilted cup⁶⁴
 I got myself a comrade.
53. Of little sands,⁶⁵ of little seas,
 little are the minds of men;⁶⁶
that's why all people haven't become equivalently wise;⁶⁷
 each class of humankind is half[-wise].⁶⁸

54. Meðalsnotr skyli manna hvern,
æva til snotr sé;
þeim er fyrða fegrst at lifa
er vel mart vitu.
55. Meðalsnotr skyli manna hvern,
æva til snotr sé;
þvíat snotrs manns hjarta verðr sjaldan glatt,
ef sá er alsnotr er á.
56. Meðalsnotr skyli manna hvern,
æva til snotr sé;
ørlög sín viti engi fyrir,
þeim er sorgalausastr sefi.
57. Brandr af brandi brenn, unz brunninn er,
funi kveykisk af funa;
maðr af manni verðr at máli kuðr,
en til dœlskr af dul.
58. Ár skal rísa, *sá* er annars vill
fé eða fjor hafa;
sjaldan liggjandi úlfr lær um getr,
né sofandi maðr sigr.
59. Ár skal rísa, *sá* er á yrkendr fá,
ok ganga síns verka á vit;
mart um dvelr þann er um morgin sefr;
hálfur er auðr und hvotum.
60. Þurra skíða ok þakinna næfra,
þess kann maðr mjöt,
ok þess viðar er vinnask megi
mál ok misseri.
61. Þvegginn ok mettr ríði maðr þingi at,
þótt hann sét væddr til vel;
skúa ok bróka skammisk engi maðr,
né hests in heldr, þótt hann hafit góðan.
62. Snapir ok gnapir, er til sævar kómr,
qrn á aldinn mar;
svá er maðr er með mórgum kómr
ok á formaelendr fá.

54. Every man should be moderately wise,
 let him never be too wise;
 those people who know just enough
 live the pleasantest lives.⁶⁹
55. Every man should be moderately wise,
 let him never be too wise;
for the heart of a wise man seldom becomes happy,
 if he who owns it is all-wise.
56. Every man should be moderately wise,
 let him never be too wise;
let no one have foreknowledge of his fate,
 one's mind is [then] freest from sorrows.
57. Brand⁷⁰ catches fire from brand, until it is burnt,
 flame is kindled from flame;
man becomes wise from man by speech,
 and too foolish from reticence.⁷¹
58. He must rise early, the one who wants to have
 another's wealth or life;
a lounging wolf seldom gets the ham,
 nor a sleeping man the victory.
59. He must rise early, the one who has few workmen,
 and go to inspect his work;⁷²
many things will hinder the one who sleeps through the morning,
 wealth is half in the hands of the willing.
60. Of dry sticks and bark for roofing,
 a man knows his measure of this,
 and of the wood that can suffice
 for three months and for six.
61. Washed and fed let a man ride to the assembly,
 even if he isn't too well attired;
of his shoes and breeches let no man be ashamed,
 or of his horse either, even if he hasn't a good one.
62. When an eagle comes to the sea it snaps
 and stretches at the ancient ocean;
so is a man who comes among many
 and has few speakers on his behalf.⁷³

63. Fregna ok segja skal fróðra hvern,
sá er vill heitinn horskr;
einn vita, né annarr skal,
þjóð veit, ef þrír ru.
64. Ríki sitt skyli ráðsnotra hvern
í hófi hafa;
þá hann þat finnr, er með frœknum kœmr,
at engi er einna hvatastr.
65. Orða þeira er maðr qðrum segir,
opt hann gjöld um getr.
66. Mikilsti snemma kom ek í marga staði,
en til síð í suma;
ql var drukkit, sumt var ólagat,
sjaldan hittir leiðr í lið.
67. Hér ok hvar myndi mér heim of boðit,
ef þyrftak at málungi mat;
eða tvau lær hengi at ins tryggva vinar,
þars ek hafða eitt etit.
68. Eldr er beztr með ýta sonum
ok sólar sýn,
heilyndi sitt, ef maðr hafa náir,
án við löst at lifa.
69. Erat maðr alls vesall, þótt hann sé illa heill:
sumr er af sonum sæll,
sumr af fræendum, sumr af fé œernu,
sumr af verkum vel.
70. Betra er lifðum en sé ólifðum,
ey getr kvíkr kú;
eld sá ek upp brenna auðgum manni fyrir,
en úti var dauðr fyr durum.
71. Haltr ríðr hrossi, hjorð rekr hændarvanr,
daufr vegr ok dugir;
blindr er betri en brenndr sé;
nýtr mangi nás.
72. Sonr er betri, þótt sé síð of alinn
eptir genginn guma;
sjaldan bautarsteinar standa brautu nær,
nema reisi niðr at nið.

63. Every wise man who wants to be called sensible
must ask and answer;
one man should know, but not a second,
the nation will know, if there are three.
64. Every man wise in counsel should keep
his power in check;
he will find it [out], when he comes among the brave,
that no one is boldest of all.⁷⁴
65. For the words that one says to another,
one often receives repayment.⁷⁵
66. Much too early I came to many places,⁷⁶
and too late to some;
the ale had been drunk, [or] some was unbrewed,
the hated one seldom hits the mark.⁷⁷
67. Here and there I would be invited home
if I didn't need food at meal-times;
or two hams might hang in the true friend's house
when I had [already] eaten one.⁷⁸
68. Fire is best among the sons of men,
and the sight of the sun,⁷⁹
his health, if a man can keep it,
to live without disability.⁸⁰
69. A man isn't entirely wretched, even if he's in bad health:
one man is blessed in sons,
one in kinsmen, one in sufficient wealth,
one is well-[blessed] in deeds.
70. It's better for the living than the unliving,
the live man always gets the cow;
I saw fire blaze up before a rich man,⁸¹
but death was outside the door.⁸²
71. A limping man rides a horse, a one-handed man drives a flock,
a deaf man fights and wins;
it's better to be blind than burnt;⁸³
no one has use for a corpse.
72. A son is better, even if he's born late,
after the father has passed on.⁸⁴
memorial stones seldom stand by the road
unless kinsman raises them for kinsman.

73. Tveir ru eins herjar; tunga er hófuðs bani;
er mér í heðin hvern handar væni.
74. Nótt verðr feginn, sá er nesti trúir;
skammar ru skips rár;
hverf er haustgríma;
fjolð um viðrir á fimm dógum,
en meira á mánaði.
75. Veita hinn er vætki veit:
margr verðr *af aurum* api;
maðr er auðigr, annarr óauðigr,
skylit þann vítna vár.
76. Deyr fé, deyja frændr,
deyr sjálfr it sama;
en orðstírr deyr aldregi
hveim er sér góðan getr.
77. Deyr fé, deyja frændr,
deyr sjálfr it sama;
ek veit einn at aldri deyr:
dómur um dauðan hvern.
78. Fullar grindr sá ek fyr Fitjungs sonum;
nú bera þeir vánar vol;
svá er auðr sem augabragð,
hann er valtastr vina.
79. Ósnotr maðr, ef eignask getr
fé eða fljóðs munuð,
metnaðr honum þróask, en manvit aldregi,
fram gengr hann, drjúgt í dul.
80. Þat er þá reynt, er þú at rúnum spyrr,
inum reginkunnum,
þeim er görðu ginnregin
ok fáði Fimbulpulr;
þá hefir hann bazt ef hann þegir.
81. At kveldi skal dag leyfa, konu er brennd er,
mæki er reyndr er, mey er gefin er,
ísl er yfir kómr, ól er drukkit er.

73. Two⁸⁵ are the destroyers of one; the tongue is the head's slayer,⁸⁶
I expect a hand inside every fur cloak.⁸⁷
74. Night is welcome to the one who trusts his provisions;
short are a ship's yard-arms,⁸⁸
an autumn night⁸⁹ is changeable;
a wealth of weather in five days,
and⁹⁰ more in a month.
75. He who knows nothing doesn't know it:
many a man becomes an ape⁹¹ through money;
one man is wealthy, another unwealthy,
one shouldn't blame him for his misfortune.
76. Cattle die, kinsmen die,⁹²
one dies oneself the same;
but reputation never dies
for whoever gets himself a good one.
77. Cattle die, kinsmen die,
one dies oneself the same;
I know one thing that never dies:
the renown of every dead man.⁹³
78. Full cattle-pens I saw for Fitjungr's sons;⁹⁴
now they bear a beggar's staff,⁹⁵
wealth is just like the winking of an eye,
it's the most fickle of friends.
79. If a foolish man gets hold of wealth
or a woman's love,
his pride increases, but his intelligence never;
forward he goes, headlong into folly.
80. It's proven then, when you enquire of the runes,⁹⁶
those of divine descent,
those which mighty powers⁹⁷ made
and Fimbulpulr⁹⁸ coloured,⁹⁹
he does best then if he keeps quiet.¹⁰⁰
81. One should praise a day in the evening, a woman¹⁰¹
when she's been burned,¹⁰²
a sword when it's been proven, a girl when she's been given in marriage,
ice when it's been crossed, ale when it's been drunk.¹⁰³

82. Í vindi skal við hoggva, veðri á sjó róa,
myrkri við man spjalla; mórg eru dags augu;
á skip skal skriðar orka, en á skjold til hlifar,
mæki hoggs, en mey til kossa.
83. Við eld skal qł drekka, en á ísi skríða,
magran mar kaupa, en mæki saurgan,
heima hest feita, en hund á búi.
84. Meyjar orðum skyli mangi trúa,
né því er kveðr kona;
þvíat á hverfanda hvéli váru þeim hjortu skopuð,
brigð í brjóst um lagit.
85. Brestanda boga, brennanda loga,
gínanda úlfí, galandi kráku,
rýtanda svíni, rótlausum viði,
vaxanda vági, vellanda katli,
86. fljúganda fleini, fallandi báru,
ísi einnættum, ormi hringlegnum,
brúðar beðmálum eða brotnu sverði,
bjarnar leiki eða barni konungs,
87. sjúkum kálfi, sjálfráða þræli,
vølu vilmæli, val nýfelldum,
88. akri ársánum, trúi engi maðr,
né til snemma syni —
veðr ræðr akri, en vit syni;
hætt er þeira hvárt —
89. bróðurbana sínum, þótt á brautu mœti,
húsi hálfbunnu, hesti alskjótum —
þá er jór ónýtr ef einn fótr brotnar —
verðit maðr svá tryggr at þessu trúi qllu!
90. Svá er friðr kvenna, þeira er flátt hyggja,
sem aki jó óbryddum á ísi hálum,
teitum, tvévetrum ok sé tamr illa,
eða í byr óðum beiti stjórnlausu,
eða skyli haltr henda hrein í þáfjalli.
91. Bert ek nú mæli, þvíat ek bæði veit —
brigðr er karla hugr konum;
þá vér fegrst mælum, er vér flást hyggjum —
þat tælir horska hugi.

82. One should fell a tree in a wind,¹⁰⁴ row to sea in fine weather,¹⁰⁵
chat with a girl in the dark; many are the eyes of day;
one should look to a ship for speed, and to a shield for protection,
a sword for a blow, and a girl for kisses.
83. One should drink ale by the fire,¹⁰⁶ and skate on ice,
buy a lean horse, and a dirty sword;¹⁰⁷
fatten a horse at home, but a hound at [another's] house.
84. No one should trust a girl's words,
or what a woman¹⁰⁸ says,
because their hearts were shaped on a whirling wheel,¹⁰⁹
fickleness was laid in their breast.¹¹⁰
85. In a breaking bow, in a burning flame,
in a gaping wolf, in a cawing crow,¹¹¹
in a grunting boar, in a rootless tree,
in a rising wave, in a boiling cauldron,¹¹²
86. in a flying shaft, in a falling wave,
in one-night-old ice, in a coiled snake,¹¹³
in a bride's bed-talk or in a broken sword,
in a bear's play or in a king's child,
87. in a sick calf, in a self-willed slave,
in a seeress's satisfying words,¹¹⁴ in a newly-felled man,
88. in a field sown early, let no one have faith,
nor in a son too soon —
weather rules the field, and sense the son;
each of them is at risk —
89. in one's brother's slayer, if one should meet him on the road,
in a half-burned house, in a very fast horse —
a horse is useless if it breaks one leg —
let no man become so trusting that he puts faith in all these!¹¹⁵
90. Loving women,¹¹⁶ those who think deceitful thoughts,
is like driving a horse without spikes on slippery ice,
a frisky two-year-old and ill-trained,
or like tacking a rudderless ship against a raging wind,
or having, as a limping man, to lay hands on a
reindeer on a thawing mountain.¹¹⁷
91. I shall now speak plainly, for I know both —
men's feelings for women are fickle;
when we speak most sweetly, we think most deceitfully —
that deludes wise minds.

92. Fagrt skal mæla ok fé bjóða,
sá er vill fljóðs ást fá,
líki leyfa ins ljósa mans,
sá fær er frjár.
93. Ástar firna skyli engi maðr
annan aldregi;
opt fá á horskan, er á heimskan né fá,
lostfagrir litir.
94. Eyvitar firna er maðr annan skal
þess er um margan gengr guma;
heimska ór horskum görir hólða sonu
sá inn mátki munr.
95. Hugr einn þat veit er býr hjarta nær,
einn er hann sér um sefa;
øng er sótt verri hveim snostrup manni
en sér øngu at una.
96. Þat ek þá reynda er ek í reyri sat
ok vættak míns munar;
hold ok hjarta var mér in horska mær,
þeygi ek hana at heldr hefik.
97. Billings mey ek fann beðjum á
sólhvítá sofa;
jarls ynði þótti mér ekki vera,
nema við þat lík at lifa.
98. 'Auk nær apni skaltu, Óðinn, koma,
ef þú vilt þér mæla man;
allt eru ósköp, nema einir viti
slíkan löst saman!'
99. Aprtr ek hvarf ok unna þóttumsk,
vísum vilja frá;
hitt ek hugða, at ek hafa mynda
geð hennar allt ok gaman.
100. Svá kom ek næst, at in nýta var
vígdrótt qll um vakin;
með brennandum ljósum ok bornum viði,
svá var mér vílstígr of vitaðr.

92. He must speak sweetly and offer wealth,
the one who wants to win a woman's love,
praise the radiant girl's body,
he who woos wins.
93. No one should ever find fault
with another over love;
often ravishingly fair looks enthrall a wise man,
when they don't enthrall a fool.
94. One should find fault with another
for nothing that happens to many a man;
that mighty desire¹¹⁸ makes dolts
out of wise sons of men.
95. The mind alone knows that which lives near the heart,
he¹¹⁹ is alone with his thoughts;
no sickness is worse for any wise man
than to be content with nothing.
96. I¹²⁰ proved that¹²¹ when I sat in the reeds
and waited for my love,¹²²
the wise girl was flesh and heart to me,
yet I have her none the more for that.
97. I found Billingr's daughter¹²³ in bed,
sleeping, sun-white;
an earl's delight seemed as nothing to me,
unless I could live with that body.¹²⁴
98. 'You must come again towards evening, Óðinn,
if you want to win the girl with words;
all will be undone, unless we alone
know of such shame together!'¹²⁵
99. Back I turned and thought myself in love,
from certain delight,¹²⁶
I thought this, that I would have
her whole heart and love-play.
100. Thus [it was when] I came next,
that the able warband was all awake;
with burning lights and raised wood,¹²⁷
thus was a misery-path¹²⁸ appointed for me.

101. Ok nær morni, er ek var enn um kominn,
 þá var saldrótt um sofin;
 grey eitt ek þá fann innar góðu konu
 bundit beðjum á.
102. Mæg er góð mær, ef gørva kannar,
 hugbrigð við hali;
 þá ek þat reynda, er it ráðspaka
 teygða ek á flærðir fljóð;
 háðungar hverrar leitaði mér it horska man,
 ok hafða ek þess vætki vifs.
103. Heima glaðr gumi ok við gesti reifr
 sviðr skal um sik vera,
 minnigr ok málugr, ef hann vill margfróðr vera;
 opt skal góðs geta;
 fimbulfambi heitir sá er fátt kann segja:
 þat er ósnotrs aðal.
104. Inn aldna jötun ek sótta, nú em ek aptr um kominn;
 fátt gat ek þegjandi þar;
 mærgum orðum mælta ek í minn frama
 í Suttungs sölum.
105. Gunnloð mér um gaf gullnum stóli á
 drykk ins dýra mjaðar;
 ill iðgjold lét ek hana eptir hafa
 síns ins heila hugar,
 síns ins svára sefa.
106. Rata munn léturnk rúms um fá
 ok um grjót gnaga;
 yfir ok undir stóðumk jötna vegir,
 svá hætta ek hófði til.
107. Vel keypts litar hefi ek vel notit;
 fás er fróðum vant;
 þvíat Óðrerir er nú upp kominn
 á alda vés jaðar.
108. Ifi er mér á at ek væra enn kominn
 jötna gørðum ór,
 ef ek Gunnlaðar né nytak, innar góðu konu,
 þeifar er lögðumk arm yfir.

101. And toward morning, when I had come again,
the hall-guard¹²⁹ was asleep;
then I found one of the good woman's¹³⁰ bitches
bound on the bed.
102. Many a good girl,¹³¹ if one gets to know her fully,
is fickle of mind towards men,
I proved that when I sought to seduce
the counsel-wise woman¹³² into deceit;
the wise girl attacked me with every insult,
and I had nothing of this woman.
103. A man happy at home and cheerful with guests
must be shrewd in his behaviour,¹³³
mindful and talkative, if he wants to be very knowledgeable;
he must often speak of good,¹³⁴
he who can say little is called a complete idiot:
that's the sign of the unwise.
104. I visited the ancient giant,¹³⁵ [and] now I have come back;
I got little by keeping quiet there;¹³⁶
with many words I spoke to my advancement
in Suttungr's halls.¹³⁷
105. Gunnlǫð gave me on a golden seat
a drink of the precious mead,¹³⁸
I let her have a poor reward¹³⁹
for her true feelings,
for her troubled mind.
106. I made Rati's mouth¹⁴⁰ make room
and gnaw through rock;
above and below me stood the roads of giants;¹⁴¹
that's how I risked my head for it.¹⁴²
107. I've made good use of the well-bought look,¹⁴³
for the wise one, little is lacking;
because Óðrerir¹⁴⁴ has now come up
to the rim of the sanctuary of men.¹⁴⁵
108. I doubt that I would have come back
from the courts of the giants,
if I hadn't made use of¹⁴⁶ Gunnlǫð, the good woman,
who laid her arm over me.¹⁴⁷

109. Ins hindra dags gengu hrímpursar
 Háva ráðs at fregna Háva hóllu í;
 at Bólverki þeir spurðu, ef hann væri með bøndum kominn,
 eða hefði honum Suttungr of sóit.
110. Baugeið Óðinn hygg ek at unnit hafi,
 hvæt skal hans tryggðum trúa?
 Suttung svikinn hann lét sumbli frá,
 ok grætta Gunnlǫðu.
111. Mál er at þylja þular stóli á,
 Urðar brunni at;
 sá ek ok þagðak, sá ek ok hugðak,
 hlýdda ek á manna mál;
 of rúnar heyrða ek dœma, né um ráðum þögðu,
 Háva hóllu at,
 Háva hóllu í;
 heyrða ek segja svá:
112. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, at þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð ef þú getr:
 nótt þú rísat, nema á njósn sér
 eða þú leitir þér innan út staðar!
113. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, at þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð ef þú getr:
 fjölkunnigri konu skalattu í faðmi sofa,
 svá at hon lyki þík liðum.
114. Hon svá gørir at þú gáir eigi
 þings né þjóðans máls;
 mat þú villat né mannskis gaman,
 ferr þú sorgafullr at sofa.
115. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, at þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð ef þú getr:
 annars konu teygðu þér aldregi
 eyrarúnu at.
116. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð ef þú getr:
 á fjalli eða firði ef þík fara tiðir,
 fástu at virði vel.

109. The following day,¹⁴⁸ frost-giants went
 to seek Hávi's counsel¹⁴⁹ in Hávi's hall;
they asked about Bólverkr,¹⁵⁰ whether he had come among the gods,
or whether Suttungr had slaughtered him.
110. I think Óðinn has sworn a ring-oath,¹⁵¹
 how can his pledges be trusted?
He cheated Suttungr of the drink,¹⁵²
 and caused Gunnlög to weep.
111. It is time to chant from¹⁵³ the sage's seat,¹⁵⁴
 at the spring of Urðr.¹⁵⁵
I saw and I was silent,¹⁵⁶ I saw and I pondered;
 I listened to the speech of men;
I heard them discuss runes,¹⁵⁷ they weren't silent with counsels,¹⁵⁸
 at Hávi's hall,
 in Hávi's hall;
I heard it said thus:¹⁵⁹
112. I counsel you, Loddfáfnir,¹⁶⁰ that you take¹⁶¹ my counsels;
 you'll profit if you take them,
 they'll be good for you if you get them:
 don't get up at night, unless you're on watch
or looking, from inside, for a place to relieve yourself outside!
113. I counsel you, Loddfáfnir, that you take my counsels;
 you'll profit if you take them,
 they'll be good for you if you get them:
 you mustn't sleep in the embrace of a woman wise in magic,
 so that she locks you in her limbs.¹⁶²
114. Thus she'll ensure you won't pay attention
 to the assembly or a ruler's speech,¹⁶³
you won't want food or the pleasure of anyone's fellowship,
 you'll go to sleep sorrowful.
115. I counsel you, Loddfáfnir, that you take my counsels;
 you'll profit if you take them,
 they'll be good for you if you get them:
 never lure another's wife
 into being your lover.¹⁶⁴
116. I counsel you, Loddfáfnir, and you should take my counsels;
 you'll profit if you take them,
 they'll be good for you if you get them:
 if you want to travel on fell¹⁶⁵ or fjord,
 provide yourself well with food.

117. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu, ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð, ef þú getr:
 illan mann láttu aldregi
 óhöpp at þér vita,
 þvíat af illum manni fær þú aldregi
 gjöld ins góða hugar.
118. Ofarla bíta ek sá einum hal
 orð illrar konu;
 fláráð tunga varð honum at fjörlagi,
 ok þeygi um sanna sok.
119. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð ef þú getr:
 veiztu, ef þú vin átt, þanns þú vel trúir,
 farðu at finna opt,
 þvíat hrísi vex ok hávu grasi
 vegr er vætki trøðr.
120. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð ef þú getr:
 góðan mann teygðu þér at gamanrúnum,
 ok nem líknargaldr meðan þú lifir.
121. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð ef þú getr:
 vin þínnum ver þú aldregi
 fyrri at flaumslitum;
 sorg etr hjarta ef þú segja né náir
 einhverjum allan hug.
122. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð ef þú getr:
 orðum skipta þú skalt aldregi
 við ósvinna apa.
123. Þvíat af illum manni mundu aldregi
 góðs laun um geta,
 en góðr maðr mun þik gørva mega
 líknfastan at lofi.

117. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
never let a bad man
know your misfortunes,¹⁶⁶
because from a bad man you will never get
a reward for the good intention.
118. I saw the words of an evil woman
bite a man high up;¹⁶⁷
a deceitful tongue was the death of him,
and yet the accusation was untrue.
119. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
know [this, that] if you have a friend, one whom you trust well,
go to visit him often,
because a road that no one treads becomes overgrown
with brushwood and tall grass.¹⁶⁸
120. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
draw a good man into a pleasing friendship with you,
and learn soothing charms¹⁶⁹ while you live.
121. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
never be the first to sever
happy relations with your friend;
sorrow eats the heart if you can't speak
your whole mind to someone.
122. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
you must never exchange words
with an unwise ape.¹⁷⁰
123. Because from a bad man you'll never
get a reward for the goodwill,
but a good man can make you assured
of esteem by his praise.¹⁷¹

124. Sifjum er þá blandat, hvern er segja ræðr
einum allan hug;
allt er betra en sé brigðum at vera,
era sá viðr qðrum er vilt eitt segir.
125. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
þér munu góð ef þú getr:
þrimr orðum senna skala/tu þér við verra mann;
opt inn betri bilar
þá er inn verri vegr.
126. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
njóta mundu, ef þú nemr,
þér munu góð, ef þú getr:
skósmiðr þú verir né skeptismiðr,
nema þú sjálfum þér sér;
skór er skapaðr illa eða skapt sé rangt,
þá er þér bøls beðit.
127. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
njóta mundu, ef þú nemr,
þér munu góð ef þú getr:
hvars þú bøl kannt, kveðu þat bølví at,
ok gefat þínnum fjándum frið.
128. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
þér munu góð ef þú getr:
illu feginn verðu aldregi,
en lát þér at góðu getit.
129. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
þér munu góð ef þú getr:
upp líta skalattu í orrostu —
gjalti glíkir verða gumna synir —
siðr þík um heilli halir.
130. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
þér munu góð ef þú getr:
ef þú vilt þér góða konu kveðja at gamanrúnum
ok fá fognuð af,
fogru skaltu heita ok láta fast vera:
leiðisk mangi gott, ef getr.

124. Kinship¹⁷² is exchanged when anyone decides
to tell his whole mind [to another];
anything is better than for one to be unreliable,
he who says only what's agreeable is no friend to another.
125. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
you mustn't utter [even] three words in dispute
with a worse man than you;
often the better man fails
when the worse man fights.
126. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
be neither a shoe-maker nor a shaft-maker,¹⁷³
unless you be one for yourself;
[if] the shoe is badly made or the shaft is crooked,
then evil will be invoked for you.¹⁷⁴
127. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
wherever you perceive evil, declare it as evil,
and don't give your enemies peace.
128. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
never be gladdened by evil,
but let yourself be pleased with good.
129. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
you mustn't look up in battle —
the sons of men become like a madman¹⁷⁵ —
lest men cast a spell on you.¹⁷⁶
130. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
if you want to persuade a good woman¹⁷⁷ into secret love with you
and get delight from her,
you must make fine promises and let them be firm:
no one loathes a good thing, if one gets it.

131. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð ef þú getr:
 varan bið ek þík vera, en eigi ofvaran;
 ver þú við ól varastr ok við annars konu,
 ok við þat it þriðja, at þík þjófar né leiki.
132. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð ef þú getr:
 at háði né hlátri hafðu aldregi
 gest né ganganda.
133. Opt vitu ógorla þeir er sitja inni fyrir,
 hvers þeir ru kyns, er koma;
 erat maðr svá góðr at galli né fylgi,
 né svá illr at einugi dugi.
134. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð ef þú getr:
 at hárum þul hlæðu aldregi;
 opt er gott þat er gamlir kveða;
 opt ór skorpum belg skilin orð koma,
 þeim er hangir með hám
 ok skollir með skrám
 ok váfir með vílmögum.
135. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð ef þú getr:
 gest þú né geya né á grind hrekir;
 get þú váluðum vel.
136. Rammt er þat tré er ríða skal
 qllum at upploki;
 baug þú gef, eða þat biðja mun
 þér læs hvers á liðu.
137. Ráðumk þér, Loddáfñir, en þú ráð nemir,
 njóta mundu ef þú nemr,
 þér munu góð ef þú getr:
 hvars þú ól drekkir, kjós þú þér jarðar megin,
 þvíat jorð tekr við ólðri, en eldr við sóttum,
 eik við abbindi, ax við fjölkyni,
 höll við hýrógi — heiptum skal mána kveðja —
 beiti við bitsóttum, en við bólvi rúnar;
 fold skal við flóði taka.

131. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
I bid you be wary, but not overwary;
be wariest with ale and with another's wife,
and, third, that thieves don't outwit you.
132. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
never treat a guest or a tramp
with scorn or derision.
133. Often those sitting inside are unsure
what kind of men¹⁷⁸ are those who come;
no one is so good as to have no fault,
nor so bad as to be good for nothing.
134. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
never scoff at a grey-haired sage;
often what old men say is good;
often shrewd words come from a shrunken bag,¹⁷⁹
from the one who hangs among hides
and dangles among skins
and swings among wretches.¹⁸⁰
135. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
don't bark at a guest or drive him to the gate;
provide well for a poor man.
136. Strong is the beam¹⁸¹ that must slide
to open up for all;
give an arm-ring, or visitors will invoke
every kind of injury upon your limbs.
137. I counsel you, Loddáfñir, and you should take my counsels;
you'll profit if you take them,
they'll be good for you if you get them:
wherever you may drink ale, choose for yourself earth's power,¹⁸²
for earth has strength against ale,¹⁸³ and fire against illnesses,¹⁸⁴
oak against constipation,¹⁸⁵ ear of corn against witchcraft,¹⁸⁶
elder(?)¹⁸⁷ against household strife — for hatreds
one must call on the moon¹⁸⁸ —
earthworm¹⁸⁹ against bite-illnesses,¹⁹⁰ and runes against evil;
one must take earth for the flux.

138. Veit ek at ek hekk vindga meiði á
 nætr allar níu,
 geiri undaðr ok gefinn Óðni,
 sjálfur sjálfum mér,
 á þeim meiði er mangi veit
 hvers hann af rótum renn.
139. Við hleifi mik sældu né við hornigi,
 nýsta ek niðr, nam ek upp rúnar,
 œpandi nam; fell ek aptr þaðan.
140. Fimbulljóð níu nam ek af inum frægja syni
 Bólþórs, Bestlu fóður,
 ok ek drykk of gat ins dýra mjaðar,
 ausinn Óðreri.
141. Þá nam ek frævask ok fróðr vera
 ok vaxa ok vel hafask;
 orð mér af orði orðs leitaði,
 verk mér af verki verks leitaði.
142. Rúnar munt þú finna ok ráðna stafi,
 mjók stóra stafi,
 mjók stinna stafi,
 er fáði Fimbulþulr
 ok gørðu ginnregin
 ok reist Hropr røgna,
143. Óðinn með Ásum, en fyr álfum Dáinn,
 Dvalinn dvergum fyrir,
 Ásviðr jötnum fyrir,
 ek reist sjálfur summar.
144. Veiztu hvé rísta skal? Veiztu hvé ráða skal?
 Veiztu hvé fá skal? Veiztu hvé freista skal?
 Veiztu hvé biðja skal? Veiztu hvé blóta skal?
 Veiztu hvé senda skal? Veiztu hvé sóa skal?
145. Betra er óbeðit en sé ofblótit;
 ey sér til gildis gjöf;
 betra er ósent en sé ofsóit;
 svá þundr um reist fyr þjóða rök;
 þar hann upp um reis, er hann aptr of kom.

138. I know that I hung on a windy tree¹⁹¹
for all of nine nights,¹⁹²
wounded by a spear¹⁹³ and given to Óðinn,
myself to myself,
on that tree of which no one knows
the kind of roots it runs from.¹⁹⁴
139. They blessed¹⁹⁵ me with neither bread nor horn,¹⁹⁶
I peered down,¹⁹⁷ I took up runes,¹⁹⁸
screaming I took them;¹⁹⁹ I fell back from there.²⁰⁰
140. Nine mighty songs I learnt²⁰¹ from the famous son
of Bólþórr, father of Bestla,²⁰²
and I got a drink of the precious mead,
poured from Óðrerir.²⁰³
141. Then I began to produce seed and be fertile,²⁰⁴
and to grow and feel well;
word sought word from my word,
deed sought deed from my deed.
142. Runes you will find and readable staves,²⁰⁵
very great staves,
very stiff staves,
which Fimbulþulr²⁰⁶ coloured²⁰⁷
and great powers created
and Hropr²⁰⁸ of the ruling powers carved,²⁰⁹
143. Óðinn among the Æsir,²¹⁰ and Dáinn for the elves,²¹¹
Dvalinn for the dwarves,²¹²
Ásviðr for the giants,²¹³
I carved some myself.²¹⁴
144. Do you know how one must carve?²¹⁵ Do you know how one must read?²¹⁶
Do you know how one must colour?²¹⁷ Do you know how one must test?²¹⁸
Do you know how one must invoke? Do you know how one must offer?²¹⁹
Do you know how one must send?²²⁰ Do you know how one must immolate?
145. Uninvoked is better than over-offered;²²¹
a gift always looks for repayment;
unsent²²² is better than over-immolated;
thus Þundr²²³ carved before the history of peoples,²²⁴
there he rose up, when he came back.²²⁵

146. Ljóð ek þau kann er kannat þjóðans kona
ok mannskis mógr;
'hjálp' heitir eitt, en þat þér hjálpa mun
við sòkum ok sorgum, ok sútum gørvøllum.
147. Þat kann ek annat, er þurfu ýta synir,
þeir er vilja læknar lifa.
148. Þat kann ek it þriðja: ef mér verðr þorf mikil
hapti við mína heiptmøgu,
eggjar ek deyfi minna andskota;
bítat þeim vápn né velir.
149. Þat kann ek it fjórða: ef mér fyrðar bera
bønd at bólimum,
svá ek gel at ek ganga má;
spretrr mér af fótum fjöturr,
en af høndum hapt.
150. Þat kann ek it fimmta: ef ek sé af fári skotinn
flein í fólkí vaða:
flýgra hann svá stinnt at ek stöðvigak,
ef ek hann sjónum of sék.
151. Þat kann ek it séttá: ef mik særir þegn
á rótum ráms viðar,
ok þann hal er mik heipta kveðr,
þann eta mein heldr en mik.
152. Þat kann ek it sjaunda: ef ek sé hávan loga
sal um sessmögum,
brennrat svá breitt at ek honum bjargigak;
þann kann ek galdr at gala.
153. Þat kann ek it átta, er øllum er
nytsamlikt at nema:
hvars hatr vex með hildings sonum,
þat má ek böta brátt.
154. Þat kann ek it níunda: ef mik nauðr um stendr
at bjarga fari mínu á floti,
vind ek kyrri vágí á
ok svæfik allan sæ.

146. I know those songs that a ruler's wife doesn't know,
and no one's son;
one is called 'help', and it will help you
against disputes and sorrows, and each and every suffering.²²⁶
147. I know it, a second, which the sons of men need,
those who want to live as healers.²²⁷
148. I know it, the third:²²⁸ if I have great need
of a fetter²²⁹ for my foes,
I blunt the edges²³⁰ of my enemies;
for them neither weapons nor staffs will bite.
149. I know it, the fourth: if people put
bonds on my arms and legs,²³¹
I chant so that I can walk;
the fetter springs from my legs,
and the shackle from my arms.
150. I know it, the fifth: if I see a shaft shot
in malice flying in battle,²³²
it doesn't fly so forcefully that I can't stop it,
if I see it with my sight.²³³
151. I know it, the sixth: if a warrior²³⁴ wounds me
on the roots of a strong²³⁵ tree²³⁶ —
so too with that man who provokes my hatred²³⁷ —
harm will devour him, rather than me.
152. I know it, the seventh: if I see a high hall²³⁸
blazing around bench-mates,
it doesn't burn so broadly that I can't save it;
I know the incantation to chant.
153. I know it, the eighth, which is useful
for all to learn:
wherever hatred grows between a warrior's sons,
I can swiftly settle it.
154. I know it, the ninth: if need arises for me
to save my ship when it's afloat,
I calm the wind on the wave
and lull all the sea to sleep.

155. Þat kann ek it tíunda: ef ek sé túnriður
 leiði lopti á,
 ek svá vinnk at þeir villir fara
 sinna heim hama,
 sinna heim huga.
156. Þat kann ek it ellipta: ef ek skal til orrostu
 leiða langvini,
 undir randir ek gel, en þeir með ríki fara,
 heilir hildar til,
 heilir hildi frá,
 koma þeir heilir hvaðan.
157. Þat kann ek it tólppta: ef ek sé á tré uppi
 váfa virgilná,
 svá ek rist ok í rúnum fák
 at sá gengr gumi
 ok mælir við mik.
158. Þat kann ek it þrettánda: ef ek skal þegn ungan
 verpa vatni á,
 munat hann falla, þótt hann í fólk komi,
 hnígra sá halr fyr hjórum.
159. Þat kann ek it fjortánda: ef ek skal fyrða liði
 telja tíva fyrir,
 Ása ok álfa ek kann allra skil;
 fár kann ósnotr svá.
160. Þat kann ek it fimmtánda, er gól Þjóðreyrir,
 dvergr, fyr Dellings durum:
 afl gól hann Ásum, en álfum frama,
 hyggju Hroptatý.
161. Þat kann ek it sextánda: ef ek vil ins svinna mans
 hafa geð allt ok gaman,
 hugi ek hverfi hvítarmri konu
 ok sný ek hennar qllum sefa.
162. Þat kann ek it sjautjánda, at mik mun seint firrask
 it manunga man.
 Ljóða þessa mun ðu, Loddfáfnir,
 lengi vanr vera,
 þó sé þér góð ef þú getr,
 nýt ef þú nemr,
 þorfr ef þú þiggr.

155. I know it, the tenth: if I see fence-riders²³⁹
sporting in the air,
I bring it about that they go astray²⁴⁰
to the home of their shapes(?),
to the home of their minds(?).²⁴¹
156. I know it, the eleventh: if I have to lead
long-standing friends into conflict,
I chant beneath the shield-rims, and they journey with strength,²⁴²
safe to battle,
safe from battle,
they come safe from anywhere.
157. I know it, the twelfth: if I see a halter-corpse²⁴³
dangling up in a tree,
I so carve and colour-in runes
that that man walks
and talks with me.
158. I know it, the thirteenth: if I have to throw
water on a young warrior,²⁴⁴
he won't fall, even if he comes into battle,²⁴⁵
that man won't sink before swords.
159. I know it, the fourteenth: if I have to count the gods
before a company of people,
of Æsir²⁴⁶ and elves I know all their attributes;
few fools can do that.
160. I know it, the fifteenth, which Þjóðreyrir, a dwarf,²⁴⁷
chanted before Dellingr's doors.²⁴⁸
he chanted strength to the Æsir,²⁴⁹ and courage²⁵⁰ to the elves,
intellect to Hroptatýr.²⁵¹
161. I know it, the sixteenth: if I wish to have the whole heart
and sexual pleasure of the wise girl,
I turn the feelings of the white-armed woman
and I twist her whole heart.
162. I know it, the seventeenth, so that the girly girl
will be slow to leave me.
These songs, Loddáfñir, you will²⁵²
long be lacking,
though it would be good for you if you get them,
[they would be] useful if you take them,
needful if you receive them.

163.

Þat kann ek it átjánda, er ek æva kennik
mey né manns konu —
allt er betra er einn um kann;
þat fylgir ljóða lokum —
nema þeiri einni er mik armi verr,
eða mín systir sé.

164.

Nú eru Háva mál kveðin Háva høllu í,
allþorfrf ýta sonum,
óþorfrf ýta sonum!
Heill sá er kvað! Heill sá er kann!
Njóti sá er nam!
Heilir þeirs hlýddu!

163. I know it, the eighteenth, which I never teach
to a girl or a man's wife —
everything is better when only one knows;
it²⁵³ marks the end of the songs —
except to her alone who enfolds me in her arms,
or who might be my sister.²⁵⁴
164. Now Hávi's sayings have been spoken in Hávi's hall,
most useful to the sons of men,
useless to the sons of men(?)!²⁵⁵
Hail to the one who spoke! Hail to the one who knows!
Let the one who learned profit!²⁵⁶
Hail to those who listened!

Textual Apparatus to *Hávamál*

Hávamál] R rubricated but faded

1/1 *Gáttir*] R the first letter is large, rubricated and inset

6/8 *maðr*] R has the m-rune, standing for *maðr*, here and subsequently

11/4 *verra*] R *vera*

12/3 *sonum*] R *sona*

14/4 *glðr*] R originally written *auðr*

14/4 *bazt*] R *baztr*

18/6 *vits*] R *er vitz*

21/6 *mál*] R *mals*

22/6 *era*] R *er*

27/1 *maðr*] R absent

28/1 *þykkisk*] R *þycceriz*

32/3 *virði*] R *víði* (perhaps first written *viði* 'wood')

32/3 *vrekask*] R *recaz*

35/1 *skal*] R absent (haplography)

36/6 *bæn*] R *bqN*

37/1–3 *betra ... hverr*] R abbreviates *b. b. L. s. h. h. hv̄er*

39/5 *svá gjøflan*] R *svagi*

49/2 *ek*] R *ek | ek* (i.e., repeated across line division)

49/5 *ript*] R *rift*

50/3 *hlýrat*] R *hlyrar*

55/1–3] R abbreviates *Meðal snotr s. maNa h.*

56/1–3] R abbreviates *Meðal s. s. maNa h(ver)*

56/5] The scribe seems to have cancelled an instance of the m-rune (for *maðr* 'man') after *engi*

58/1–2 *rísa, sá er*] R *ri | sa er*

60/3–4 *mjöt, ok*] R *miotvðc* with *v* underdotted

62/1–6] The scribe wrote this stanza after the following one, but indicated the need for transposition

63/6 *þrír ru*] R *þrīrv*

70/2] *en sé ólifðum*] R *ok sæl lifðom*

71/2 *handarvanr*] R *hundar vanr*

75/3 *af aurum*] R *aflavðrom*

77/2–3] R abbreviates *d. f^{and}r*

86/8 *eða*] R *eð*

94/4 *horskum*] R *horscaN*

95/4 *sótt*] R *sot*

102/9 *vætki*] R *vætkis*

107/6 *jaðar*] R *iarðar*

111/1 *Mál*] R the first letter is large and lightly ornamented in the inner margin

111/2 á] R a later hand has written *at* above this blurred (erased?) word

113/3 *Urðar*] R the same later hand has written a + sign above this blurred (erased?) word, linking to + *urðar* in the margin

112/5 *þú*] R followed by *n*, which is marked for deletion by underdotting

113/1–4] R abbreviates *Raðomc per l. a. þ. R. n. n.*

113/6 *skalattu*] R *scalatv* (corrected from *scaltv*); after this word, the words *fiRa þic* are marked for removal by underdotting

115/1–4] R abbreviates *Raðomc þ. L.*

116/1–4] R abbreviates *Raðomc per l. f. e⁽ⁿⁿ⁾*

117/1–4] R abbreviates *Rað. þ.*

118/2 *sá*] R after this word, the word *bíta* is marked for deletion by underdotting

119/1–4] R abbreviates *Raðomc per*; likewise in stanzas 120–22, 125–32, 135, 137

125/6 *skalattu*] R *scalatv* (corrected from *scaltv*)

127/6 *þat*] R *þ* (with abbreviation mark), which could also stand for *þér*

129/9 *þik*] R *þit^t*

131/6 *en*] R Tironian sign for *oc*

131/10 *þik*] R absent

134/1–4] R abbreviates *Rað. Þ^{er}*

135/5 *geya*] R *geyia*

135/6 *hrekir*] R *hrökir* ‘spit’

138/1 *Veit*] R the first letter is ornamented and half-inset, presumably indicating the start of a new section

139/1 *sældu*] R *seldo*

139/6 *þaðan*] R *þatan*

140/3 *føður*] R the letters *syn* or *syni* (cf. *syni* in 140/2) have been erased before this word

143/2–3 *Dáinn, Dvalinn*] R the scribe wrote *dvaliN daiN*, but then marked these words for transposition; after *daiN* comes a point and the Tironian sign for *oc* ‘and’ (removed from this edition)

144/3 *Veitzu hvé*] R abbreviates *v. h.*, and in the subsequent five instances

147/1 *annat*] R II (and accordingly in following stanzas)

148/1 *it*] R absent

151/3 *ráms*] R *rás*

164/4 *yta*] R corrected to *iotna* ‘of giants’ in the margin by a later hand

Notes to the Translation

- 1 *Hávi* ‘High One’, an alias of Óðinn, is the weak form of the adjective *hár* ‘high’.
- 2 The boards are those of a Norse hall’s wooden platform, which featured benches. A variant of this stanza is quoted in *SnEGylf* (2, p. 8); for another variant, see *SnEUpp* (5, p. 12).
- 3 That is, to the hosts. These words are presumably spoken by a visitor to a hall, in expectation of hospitality.
- 4 The anonymous ‘guest’ perhaps functions as both Everyman and Óðinn, who is called *Gestr* ‘Guest’ elsewhere in Old Norse literature.
- 5 Or ‘impatient’.
- 6 The sense of the second half of this stanza is uncertain, but it may be that unexpected visitors had to sit on a stack of firewood near the hall’s entrance until they were granted a reception inside commensurate with their perceived importance.
- 7 I.e., on the part of the host.
- 8 I.e., words from the host, followed by silence in which the guest can himself speak.
- 9 I.e., he is mocked by those who wink at each other.
- 10 Or ‘the wary man seldom commits a culpable blunder’ (Evans, *Hávamál*, p. 78).
- 11 Or ‘innate intelligence’ (*manvit*).
- 12 I.e., praise and high esteem.
- 13 The sense of the second half of this stanza is rather obscure.
- 14 In other words, ‘a poor man’s existence depends on this’.
- 15 Literally, ‘field’, ‘plain’.
- 16 Or ‘forgetfulness’, ‘unawareness’, of the kind experienced the morning after a bout of heavy drinking. The literal sense of *óminni* is ‘un-memory’, but there is a likely pun on **ármenni* ‘river-mouth, estuary’, a natural location for a hunting heron. Contrast Óðinn’s informative raven *Muninn*, whose name relates to *muna* ‘to remember’.
- 17 Or ‘motionless’, the image being of a heron watching for fish to catch with its spear-like bill. Additionally, the heron was known proverbially for its vomiting and popularly associated with drunkenness. It may well be relevant to this stanza, and the next, that Óðinn, having taken the form of an eagle (originally a heron?), spewed and possibly defecated the mead of poetry after stealing it from the giant Suttungr, according to *SnEskáld* (I, G58, pp. 4–5). Conceivably, some Norse halls might have contained avian ornamentation related to the imagery in this stanza (cf. *Grm.* 10).

- 18 Or ‘over ales’.
- 19 Or ‘men’s/people’s wits’. There might be an implicit contrast with how Óðinn, who lives on wine alone (*Grm.* 19), enhanced his wits when drunk on the mead of poetry. In *geð* ‘wits’, there might be a pun on *gedda* ‘pike’.
- 20 Possibly, Óðinn was himself in the form of a heron. This reference might also contain a wry allusion to feathers stuffing bedclothes which surround and cover the drunken victim.
- 21 Perhaps implicitly as a *fiskr* ‘fish’, given this line’s *f*-alliteration.
- 22 Or ‘enclosure’, here perhaps alluding to Gunnlǫð’s bedchamber and a bed with side-rails.
- 23 I.e., the speaker—presumably Óðinn or a human who identifies with this god—became incapacitated by drink. *Gunnlǫð* ‘Battle Invitation’ is a giantess. For Óðinn’s seduction of her, by which he gains a drink of mead that filled him with poetic wisdom, see *Háv.* 104–10.
- 24 The identity of the ‘wise’ (or ‘fertile’) Fjalarr is uncertain. Perhaps he is Gunnlǫð’s father, though that role is assigned to Suttungr in *Háv.* 104, 109–10 and *SnEskáld*. Elsewhere, the name *Fjalarr* (cf. *fela* ‘to conceal’) denotes the giant also known as Skrýmir, a cockerel that lives in a tree (*Vsp.* 41), and a dwarf—perhaps significantly, according to *SnEskáld* (I, G57, p. 3), one of the dwarves who brewed the mead of poetry, which was later taken from them by Suttungr.
- 25 I.e., when one gets overly drunk.
- 26 I.e., recovers from drunkenness.
- 27 Or ‘cowardly’.
- 28 I.e., bewares of and avoids.
- 29 Or ‘the man’s mind is revealed’.
- 30 The scene seems to be a drinking-party, in which a drinking-bowl is passed from man to man.
- 31 I.e., ‘leave the pasture’.
- 32 I.e., stomach.
- 33 The Old Norse line may present a relatively rare instance of *v-* (in *vesall*) alliterating with a vowel (*i-* in *illa*); cf. *Háv.* 117.
- 34 Or ‘he finds when the assembly comes round’. The assembly is a legal gathering.
- 35 Or ‘in (a time of) misfortune’.
- 36 Alternatively, ‘of what is said about a man/men/people’, or ‘of what befalls a man/men/people’, or ‘of what is current about a man/men/people’. In other words (whatever the words’ precise meaning), people gossip.
- 37 I.e., senseless words.
- 38 Or ‘unless guards possess it’, the guards, literally ‘holding (ones)’, being a metaphor for self-control.
- 39 Literally, ‘one shouldn’t have another (as a subject) for winking at’.
- 40 This line appears metaphorical, meaning ‘and if he manages to sit quietly and isn’t caught out’.
- 41 The first half of this stanza may be corrupt. Its second line is metrically suspect, as the first syllable of a disyllabic word at the end of a ‘full line’ of *ljóðaháttir* is normally short.

- 42 Or ‘loyal’.
- 43 For this line to alliterate, an East Norse or pre-literary West Norse form of the verb *rekask* is required, namely **vrekask*; cf. *Vm.* 53.
- 44 Literally, ‘(hu)mankind’s strife, it will always be’.
- 45 Or ‘friend’. The idea is probably that one should usually eat early, so as to be able to get on with one’s work, unless one is going to visit someone, in which case it is better to eat later, so as not be famished on arrival.
- 46 Or perhaps ‘though he is (to be) met with further off’.
- 47 I.e., it is better to have a small house than none at all. This line lacks alliteration in the Old Norse and may therefore be corrupt; emendation of *lítit* ‘little’ to *bert* ‘bare’ has been suggested.
- 48 Or ‘withy-raftered’.
- 49 This line may well be corrupt, as it lacks alliteration; see note to previous stanza.
- 50 I.e., as Evans, *Hávamál*, p. 91 explains: ‘that accepting (of hospitality from him) was not (in his eyes) a gift (and therefore demanding repayment)’.
- 51 I.e., a wealthy man should spend some of his riches, not suffer need from hoarding it.
- 52 Or ‘on oneself’. Evans, *Hávamál*, p. 92 explains: ‘the reciprocally exchanged gifts which they bear on their bodies give the most manifest testimony to their mutual generosity’.
- 53 The implication may that one should require *scornful* laughter with the same, though advice to reciprocate kind-hearted laughter would also make sense.
- 54 Literally, ‘speak around one’s thought’.
- 55 Or perhaps ‘then I became wild in my ways’. The speaker may be Óðinn, the aged, wandering god.
- 56 The observation ‘man is man’s delight’ is also made in the *Icelandic Rune-Poem*.
- 57 Or perhaps ‘(For use) in the field’ (*velli at*)—i.e., ‘On the battlefield’. The ‘clothes’ might then be armour.
- 58 Probably Óðinn.
- 59 The nature of these ‘tree-men’ is uncertain. Possibilities include scarecrows, road signs, farmstead trees used for hanging clothes out to dry, and human-shaped idols carved from wood. Then again, warriors are often described as trees in skaldic poetry. Cf. also *Vsp.* 17, where Óðinn bestows a gift on the first man and woman, *Askr* ‘Ash’ and *Embla* ‘Little Elm(?)’.
- 60 Or ‘warriors’, ‘upstanding men’ (*rekkar*).
- 61 A fir-tree’s roots, shoots and bark are eaten by various farm animals, and its bark was used to make flour.
- 62 I.e., large.
- 63 Or ‘praise’.
- 64 ‘Tilted’ either because it is only half full or because the cup-holder has tilted it to pour his friend half.
- 65 I.e., sand-banks, stretches of sands or sea-shores.
- 66 An obscure passage, but perhaps the sense is that people whose lives are restricted to islets have small minds because of their lack of experience of the world at large.

- 67 There is perhaps an implicit contrast between the knowledge of stay-at-homes and people who travel far afield.
- 68 The interpretation of the whole stanza is uncertain.
- 69 Evans, *Hávamál*, p. 100 observes that ON *vel mart* otherwise means not ‘just enough’ (as translated here) but ‘a good many things’, and that to avoid contradicting the first half of the stanza, it may therefore be better to emend the second half to *þeim era fyrða fegrst at lifa, er vel mart vitu* ‘those people who know a good many things don’t live the sweetest lives’ or *þeim er fyrða fegrst at lifa, er vel mart vitut* ‘those people who don’t know a good many things live the sweetest lives’.
- 70 I.e., a piece of firewood.
- 71 Or ‘from folly’.
- 72 Perhaps emend to *ok ganga verka á vit* ‘and go to inspect (his) works’ (Evans, *Hávamál*, p. 102).
- 73 This man is perhaps to be imagined making his case frantically, turning his head this way and that, and snatching at every opportunity amid a ‘sea’ of opponents.
- 74 Perhaps the lesson here is to avoid throwing one’s weight around, as one day one will face someone even bolder than oneself. Cf. *Fm.* 17.
- 75 If there was once a second half to this stanza, it is lost.
- 76 The speaker is perhaps Óðinn again.
- 77 Literally, ‘seldom hits in the joint’.
- 78 Possibly the idea is that, just as niggardly folk often invite the speaker home when they know he will not want food, so he is often unfortunate enough to have eaten before arriving at the house of a good friend whose larder turned out to be stocked for two people.
- 79 I.e., either ‘the appearance of the sun’ or ‘the ability to see the sun’, but the former is more likely.
- 80 Or ‘to live without moral failing’.
- 81 Possibly the fire of his hearth.
- 82 Alternatively, ‘I saw fire blaze up for a rich man, but he was dead outside the door’; or ‘I saw fire blaze up to the disadvantage of a rich man [by burning his house down?], and he was dead outside the door.’
- 83 I.e., cremated; cf. *Háv.* 81.
- 84 I.e., it is better to have a son than no son, even if he is born after his father’s death.
- 85 I.e., two people.
- 86 That ‘careless talk costs lives’ is a familiar idea, but in societies founded on principles of honour and shame, speech can also be used as a weapon to destroy people’s reputations—and lives.
- 87 Literally, ‘for me there is expectation of a hand in every fur cloak’. This stanza is in *málaháttir*. It is often considered an interpolation, as is the next.
- 88 A statement of uncertain significance. Evans, *Hávamál*, pp. 110–11 outlines three possibilities: i) because short yard-arms—needed for gusty journeys through narrow fjords—support only small sails and, therefore, only slow speeds, be sure of your provisions, as you may face many overnight stops before reaching your destination; ii) make sure you have food for a long voyage, as shipwrights invariably make yard-arms shorter than you would wish;

- iii) if your ship sinks, do not count on clinging to a yard-arm to save you from drowning, as they are short and may not support your weight.
- 89 Literally, an ‘autumn-mask/covering’.
- 90 Or ‘but’.
- 91 I.e., a fool.
- 92 The first line of this stanza also appears in *Hák.* 21. Cf. line 108 of the Old English poem *The Wanderer: Her bið feoh læne, her bið freond læne* ‘Here property [literally ‘cattle’] is transitory [literally ‘loaned’], here a friend is transitory’.
- 93 Or ‘the judgement about every dead man’.
- 94 Fitjungr and his sons are otherwise unknown. They might be fabrications or the inhabitants of a large farm called *Fitjar* ‘Water-Meadows’ on the island of Storð in Hørðaland, Norway, who lost their home when Haraldr hárfagri took it. Another possibility is that *fitjungr* is a common noun for ‘rich man’, in which case the line would mean ‘Full cattle-pens I saw for a rich man’s sons’.
- 95 I.e., they are now beggars.
- 96 Or ‘That will be proven (or ‘tested’), what you enquire of (or ‘ask about’) from the runes’. What *þat* ‘it/that’ refers to is unclear—perhaps the results of one’s enquiry or simply the advisability of silence. Here runes are runic letters, as in *Háv.* 142–45; the ‘runes’ that Óðinn acquires by self-sacrifice on the windy tree in *Háv.* 139 are harder to define.
- 97 I.e., gods.
- 98 ‘Mighty Sage’ could be a name of Óðinn, the rune-master, as in *Háv.* 142 (cf. *Fimbultýr* in *Vsp.* 58). Alternatively, it may be a common noun. Cf. *Hav.* 111, 134.
- 99 Colours were used to paint runic inscriptions; cf. *Háv.* 142, 144 and 157. Red is mentioned several times, as in *Gör. II* 22.
- 100 There are several possible interpretations, depending on whether *bú* ‘you’ and *hann* ‘he’ refer to two different people or just one: i) if you ask someone about (or ‘to interrogate?’) the runes, let that person work silently, in order to obtain the best result; ii) if you ask someone about (or ‘to interrogate?’) the runes, listen quietly to the answer, because it will be important; iii) do not waste your breath asking someone about the runes, as their secret will not be divulged; iv) if you yourself interrogate the runes(?), keep quiet while doing so. This is a difficult and metrically irregular stanza.
- 101 Or ‘wife’.
- 102 I.e., cremated; cf. *Háv.* 71.
- 103 *Háv.* 81–83 are in *málaháttir*.
- 104 Perhaps so that one knows which way the tree will fall.
- 105 Perhaps because rowing into a wind is hard work.
- 106 Or ‘one typically drinks ale by the fire’.
- 107 Presumably because they will cost less but be just as good in the long run.
- 108 Or ‘wife’.
- 109 Perhaps a potter’s wheel, or the waxing and waning moon, which is called a *hverfanda hvél* ‘whirling wheel’ by the inhabitants of Hel (*Alv.* 14). An allusion to the Wheel of Fortune is also possible. Cf. *Sg.* 40.

- 110 A close variant of the second half of this stanza appears in chapter 21 of the thirteenth-century *Fóstbraeðra saga* ‘Saga of the Sworn Brothers’.
- 111 There is evidence that Norsemen believed crows were wise creatures whose calls were interpretable by those who knew the language of birds.
- 112 *Háv.* 85–87 are traditionally presented as two-and-a-half stanzas of *málaháttir*, but whether this is correct is debatable.
- 113 Snakes often coil themselves in a defensive posture before striking.
- 114 Like modern fortune-tellers, Norse seeresses were presumably more inclined to give their clients good news than bad; cf. *Vsp.* 22.
- 115 *Háv.* 89–90 are in *málaháttir*.
- 116 Literally ‘Thus is the love of women’.
- 117 The image in the last line is comically absurd. Evans, *Hávamál*, p. 117 observes ‘the scene is plainly Norwegian, not Icelandic ... The point of the lines is that reindeer can be caught only on skis, which cannot be used in a thaw’.
- 118 Love or lust.
- 119 I.e., a troubled person. Alternatively, ‘it [i.e., the mind] is alone with its thoughts’.
- 120 Óðinn; see *Háv.* 98.
- 121 If *þat* ‘that’ refers to the previous stanza, we should translate its final words as ‘than to find contentment with nothing’ (i.e., not to get the girl). Otherwise, the reference seems better suited to earlier stanzas about the Troublesomeness of love for women. Perhaps an immediately preceding stanza has dropped out or a misplacement has occurred.
- 122 Or perhaps ‘for the fulfilment of my desire’.
- 123 More specifically, probably, ‘unmarried, virginal daughter’. ON *mær* can also mean ‘wife’ or ‘woman’, but this sense is rarer in poetry. *Billingr* ‘Twin’ is the name of a dwarf in *Vsp.* H 13, but here the name may well denote a giant: cf. *Gillingr*, the name of a giant who plays a part in the story of the mead of poetry in *SnEskáld*. Possibly *Billingr* is the father of the Suttungr mentioned in *Háv.* 104, 109–10. With his daughter’s radiance, compare that of the giantess Gerðr in *FSk*.
- 124 The story of Óðinn and *Billingr*’s daughter is known only from *Háv.*
- 125 I.e., ‘of such a great social disgrace’. The words in this stanza are presumably spoken by *Billingr*’s daughter (or wife).
- 126 The interpretation of the first half of this stanza is disputed.
- 127 Possibly as cudgels. Alternatively perhaps, ‘with wood borne in (as torches?)’.
- 128 Or *vilstígr* ‘path of desire’. Word-play seems likely.
- 129 Or ‘household’.
- 130 ‘Good’ appears at least partly ironic here.
- 131 Again, ‘good’ seems rather ironic.
- 132 Presumably *Billingr*’s daughter (or wife).
- 133 Or ‘shrewd concerning himself’.
- 134 The sense of this line is uncertain.
- 135 The speaker is Óðinn. The giant is Suttungr (see footnote 137, below).

- 136 An understatement; in other words, Óðinn gained a great deal by speaking up. He is probably referring to his seduction of the giantess Gunnlǫð, by which he gained the precious mead that her father, Suttungr, had denied him (see footnote 137, below).
- 137 Suttungr (also *Suttungi*) is named as a giant in *SnEskáld*; giants are called ‘sons of Suttungr/ Suttungi’ in *Alv.* 34 and *FSk.* 34. The only other tale about him, including a variant version of the story told in *Háv.* 105–10, appears in *SnEskáld* (I, G57–58, pp. 3–5), though a third version of the myth seems to be outlined in *Háv.* 13–14.
- 138 Similarly *Háv.* 13, but contrast *Háv.* 138–41, which give an entirely different account of how Óðinn gained the sacred mead. *Gunnlǫð* ‘Battle Invitation’ is a giantess, Suttungr’s daughter, and we are to understand that she serves Óðinn without her father’s consent. The gift of the mead possibly symbolizes a marriage between god and giantess.
- 139 By abandoning her and taking all the mead (*Háv.* 107).
- 140 *SnEskáld* (I, G58, p. 4) records that *Rati* ‘Augur’ is an auger or gimlet; whether it truly is a proper noun is uncertain. Its ‘mouth’ must be its point.
- 141 A kenning for ‘rocks’, where the giants live.
- 142 I.e., for the mead. In *SnEskáld* Óðinn has the giant Baugi bore into a mountain, so that he can crawl inside as a snake to meet Gunnlǫð.
- 143 The translation of this line is uncertain, as *keyptr* can mean ‘exchanged’ as well as ‘bought’, and there is a possibility that the correct reading is *vél keypts* ‘wile-bought’, ‘bought by craftiness’, not *vel keypts*. More problematically, the grammatical object, *litr*, can mean various things, and we cannot tell which applies here: i) ‘look’, ‘outward appearance’, perhaps with reference to an item of clothing or an ability that Óðinn acquired which enabled him to turn into a snake or a bird, or to masquerade as a workman called *Bólverkr* ‘Evil Doer’ or a handsome young man; ii) ‘looks’ or ‘complexion’, conceivably referring to Gunnlǫð’s beauty; iii) ‘colour’, perhaps referring to the mead.
- 144 The name of a vat in which the mead of poetry was kept, according to *SnEskáld* (I, G58, p. 4). But the word’s etymological sense ‘Inspiration Stirrer’, ‘Spirit Rouser’ (cf. *Óðinn* and *Óðr*) seems more suited to the mead itself, and this might be the meaning here (the reference in *Háv.* 140 is ambiguous).
- 145 Possibly the fence surrounding Miðgarðr or Ásgarðr, or perhaps the horizon (effectively the same thing), but the interpretation of this emended line is uncertain.
- 146 Or ‘enjoyed the help of’.
- 147 Or ‘over whom I laid my arm’.
- 148 Or perhaps ‘the day after the wedding’ (of Óðinn and Gunnlǫð?).
- 149 Or ‘to ask about Hávi’s situation’.
- 150 According to *SnEskáld* (I, G58, p. 4), *Bólverkr* is the name Óðinn used when obtaining the mead of poetry. But whether it is a proper noun here is uncertain: the frost-giants may simply be asking after the ‘evil-doer’.
- 151 The identity of the speaker is uncertain. Perhaps it is the poet, or maybe it is the leader of the frost-giants upon learning—or deducing—that Óðinn was the thief. Alternatively, again, Óðinn might be sarcastically voicing the words of his detractors. Oaths sworn on rings are well-attested in Old Norse literature (cf. e.g., *Akv.* 30).
- 152 The sacred mead.
- 153 Literally, ‘on’ or ‘at’.

- 154 The sage might well be Óðinn, who is probably the *Fimbulpulr* ‘Mighty Sage’ of *Háv.* 80, 142 (cf. 134). According to *SnEGylf* (15, p. 17), the gods’ place of judgement is by Urðr’s spring.
- 155 One of the Nornir. Her spring or well is beneath the world-tree; see *Vsp.* 19–20 and cf. *Gör.* II 21.
- 156 Again, the identity of the speaker is uncertain.
- 157 Here, whether *rúnar* denotes ‘runes (i.e., runic letters)’, ‘secrets’ or ‘messages written in runes’ (or all of these) is unclear. ‘Runes’ are mentioned only fleetingly in the following section (in *Háv.* 137), but become the focus of attention in *Háv.* 142–45.
- 158 Or ‘readings’.
- 159 This impressive but obscure stanza evidently begins a new section (its first letter is ornate and enlarged in R), which was perhaps originally a separate poem.
- 160 This character is otherwise unknown. His name is also obscure: *lodd-* might be related to *loddari* ‘juggler’, ‘jester’, ‘tramp’ (cf. OE *loddere* ‘beggar’), *loddi* ‘shaggy dog’ and *loðinn* ‘shaggy’; *fáfnir* ‘embracer’ is otherwise the name of the treasure-hoarding dragon of the Sigurðr-poems (see *Fm.*); cf. note to *Háv.* 164. Stt. 111–37 are often known as *Loddfáfnismál* ‘Words for Loddfáfnir’.
- 161 Or ‘learn’, ‘accept’, ‘ingest’. Cf. the ambiguous use of *nema* in *Háv.* 139.
- 162 Or ‘so that she locks you in your limbs’, i.e., leaves you unable to move, perhaps in a state of paralysis.
- 163 Or ‘a ruler’s business’.
- 164 Cf. *Vsp.* 38.
- 165 I.e., mountain.
- 166 The Old Norse line may present a relatively rare instance of *v-* (in *vita*) alliterating with a vowel (ó- in *óhopp*), even though that vowel would normally be unstressed; cf. *Háv.* 22.
- 167 I.e., in the head (possibly).
- 168 Cf. *Grm.* 17.
- 169 It is unclear what is meant by the unique compound *líknagaldr*. ON *galdr* (here pl.) normally denotes a ‘sung spell’, ‘incantation’ (cf. OE *g(e)aldor*), and *líkna-* is related to *líkn* ‘help’, ‘benevolence’, so the etymological meaning is ‘helpful spells’ or ‘kind incantations’; cf. the *ljóð* ‘magical songs’ mentioned later in the poem. But perhaps the intended sense is merely ‘the art of making yourself loved (by being charming?)’; cf. *líknstafi* (acc. pl., ‘kindness-staves’, i.e., high esteem) in *Háv.* 8.
- 170 I.e., oaf.
- 171 The interpretation of the last line is somewhat uncertain.
- 172 *Sif* ‘kinship’ is here used metaphorically.
- 173 Specifically, a maker of spear-shafts.
- 174 I.e., the owner will curse you.
- 175 ON *gjalti* (dat. sg.) ‘madman’ is a borrowing of Old Irish *geilt*, and the belief that warriors who looked up in battle were liable to be driven mad is probably of Celtic origin. The most famous instance appears in a medieval Irish story about a man called Suibhne who looked up during a battle and was promptly transformed into a bird-like creature in fulfilment of a saint’s curse. Similarly, medieval Welsh tradition records that Merlin saw a terrible

- monster when he looked up during a battle, the sight of which drove him mad. Again, Scottish tradition tells of a wildman called Lailoken who went mad in a battle when he saw bands of warriors in the sky and heard a voice claiming he was responsible for the carnage.
- 176 These 'men' (*halir*) are mysterious, but, judging from the tale of Lailoken (mentioned in footnote 175, above), they may be supernatural sky-warriors. Another puzzle is presented by R's possessive pronoun *pitt* 'your', which ought to qualify a neut. noun (such as *andlit* 'face' or *lif* 'life', perhaps), which is lacking; it is therefore emended *pik* 'you'.
- 177 Here 'good' appears somewhat ironic, though the woman might be good-looking or of good family.
- 178 Or perhaps 'of whose kin'.
- 179 Apparently an unflattering description of an old man.
- 180 The significance of the last three lines is obscure, but the image might be of an old man (Óðinn?) hanging in a tree among the skins of sacrificed beasts and humans. Óðinn, the old god and sage, hangs himself from a windy tree in search of wisdom in *Háv.* 138–39.
- 181 A door-bar.
- 182 Earth was thought to have magical properties; cf. e.g., *Hdl.* 38 and 43 and an Old English metrical charm against *wæterælfadl* 'water-elf disease' whose speaker must repeat the words *Eorpe þe onbere eallum hire mihtum and mægenum* 'May earth carry you away with all her mights and mains'; see also note to *Gðr.* II 21.
- 183 Perhaps ale adulterated by bearded darnel.
- 184 Whether through cautery or the use of flames and smoke to combat evil spirits.
- 185 Or tenesmus, often a symptom of dysentery.
- 186 Ears of corn were used in Scandinavian folk-medicine to ward off malevolent creatures.
- 187 Conjectural. Possibly the reference is to a 'household tree', in which lived spirits that protected the home from strife and illness. Alternatively, perhaps read *höll* 'hall'.
- 188 This instruction is obscure.
- 189 ON *beiti* can also mean 'pasturage'. Other meanings that have been proposed are 'beet' and 'alum'.
- 190 This use of earthworms (if present here) has precedents in classical antiquity and parallels in Old English medical texts; see Evans, *Hávamál*, pp. 133–34.
- 191 The speaker is Óðinn. The tree is probably Yggdrasill, the world-tree which served as his gallows. In *Hál.* 5 *vingameiðr* 'swaying [or perhaps 'windy'] tree' similarly refers to a tree that serves as a gallows.
- 192 That is, nine days and nights—the Germanic peoples measured time by nights, rather than by days. A period of 'nine nights' was often associated with suffering followed by transformation or fulfillment; cf. *Grm.* 2, *FSk.* 39, 41.
- 193 The spear is Óðinn's special weapon. According to chapter 9 of *Ynglinga saga*, Óðinn had himself marked with a spearpoint on his death-bed.
- 194 Or, less likely, 'from whose roots it runs'. Possibly *hvers* should be emended to *hverjum*, to give the sense 'from what roots it runs'. Cf. *Fj.* 20, *Grm.* 31. Scholars often refer to *Háv.* 138–45 as *Rúnatal* 'The Rune-List'.
- 195 Or 'refreshed'. Who 'they' are is unspecified.
- 196 I.e., a drinking-horn.

- 197 The semantic range of the verb *nýsa* includes 'peer', 'look', 'pry', 'search', 'enquire' and 'investigate', so there could be an intellectual or spiritual dimension to this act; perhaps Óðinn is not just looking down physically but also scouring the depths of his unconscious or of Hel, the subterranean land of the dead.
- 198 ON *rún* can denote a 'letter of the runic alphabet', an 'inscription written in runes', a 'mystery' and a 'secret'. Any or all of these senses may be present here, as *nema (upp)* 'to take (up)' could refer to either the lifting of physical objects or the acquisition of abstract knowledge.
- 199 Or, perhaps, 'I learnt [literally 'picked up'] secrets, screaming I learnt them'.
- 200 Or, just possibly, 'I fell again from there', but it seems unlikely that Óðinn would undergo this ordeal of discovery more than once. *Háv.* 145 may describe Óðinn's subsequent resurrection. Some editors present *Háv.* 139 as *ljoðaháttir*, but the alliteration of the second full line is then somewhat suspect.
- 201 Or 'took'.
- 202 Taken by itself, the text is ambiguous: it could mean either 'from the famous son of Bólþórr, [from the son who was also the] father of Bestla' or 'from the famous son of Bólþórr, [Bólþórr being the] father of Bestla'. But *SnEGylf* records that Bestla, Óðinn's mother, was the daughter of the giant Bólþorn, who is presumably the person here called Bólþórr. The identity of Bólþórr's famous son is uncertain—though the giant Mímir has been suggested—but it is significant that he is apparently Óðinn's maternal uncle, as the uncle-nephew relationship was important in early Germanic societies.
- 203 Or 'and I got a drink of the precious mead, [having been] sprinkled with Óðrerir'. It is, therefore, unclear whether Óðrerir is here the name of the container in which the mead was kept, or of the mead itself.
- 204 Or 'wise'. Both senses may be operative.
- 205 Or 'interpretable/meaningful staves'. The reference is to runic letters.
- 206 Probably Óðinn; cf. *Háv.* 80 and 111.
- 207 Or perhaps 'carved'; cf. *Háv.* 80.
- 208 An alias of Óðinn.
- 209 Or 'and Hropr carved among the ruling powers'. Óðinn has already referred to himself in the third person in *Háv.* 138, and may do so again here, and at the start of the next stanza, and in *Háv.* 145.
- 210 Or 'the gods'.
- 211 Dáinn 'Dead One' is a dwarf in *Vsp.* H 11 and 13 and *Hdl.* 7, but dwarves and elves seem to some extent interchangeable. Dáinn, like Dvalinn, is also the name of one of four stags which gnaw the shoots of the world-tree in *Grm.* 33.
- 212 Dvalinn 'Delayed One' is a dwarf; see *Vsp.* 11. Dvalinn, like Dáinn, is also the name of one of four stags which gnaw the shoots of the world-tree in *Grm.* 33.
- 213 Ásviðr 'God/Beam Wood(?)' or 'Extremely Wise' is otherwise unknown.
- 214 Perhaps Óðinn again; if not, the speaker is unknown.
- 215 Alternatively, 'Know how one must carve! Know how one must read!', etc. Runic inscriptions are the object of at least the first three statements in this stanza.
- 216 Or 'interpret'.

- 217 Cf. *Háv.* 80.
- 218 How one was to ‘test’ or ‘make trial of’ runes—assuming they are the topic in question—is unclear.
- 219 I.e., in sacrifice.
- 220 Here *senda* seems to mean ‘send (in relation to sacrifice)’, as in *Háv.* 145 ósent ‘unsacrificed’, but the precise sense is elusive.
- 221 I.e., over-sacrificed.
- 222 I.e., unsacrificed.
- 223 An alias of Óðinn, possibly meaning ‘Thunder(er)’.
- 224 Alternatively, ‘before the origin of peoples’, ‘before the destiny of humankind’ or ‘before the doom of nations’.
- 225 Or ‘(in the place) where he rose up, when he came back.’ Either way, the meaning is obscure. It might, however, describe Óðinn’s resurrection, after he ‘fell back from there [i.e., from the windy tree]’ in *Háv.* 139, in an echo that forms a concluding frame to the *Rúnatal* section; it would make sense for Óðinn to carve runes as soon as he returned from the deathly ordeal during which he had learnt them.
- 226 Scholars often call *Háv.* 146–63 the *Ljóðatal* ‘List of Songs’. Snorri Sturluson probably knew these verses and understood their *ek* ‘T’ as Óðinn, as he seems to draw on them for his description of Óðinn’s skills in *Ynglinga saga*.
- 227 If there was once a second half of this stanza, it is lost.
- 228 Literally, ‘I know it/that (as) the third’.
- 229 Here the ‘fetter’ is presumably metaphorical.
- 230 I.e., sword-edges.
- 231 Alternatively, *boglimum*, with the same meaning, ‘limbs’, ‘arms and legs’.
- 232 Or ‘into a host’.
- 233 I.e., ‘with my eyes’.
- 234 Or ‘thane’, ‘man’.
- 235 If, instead of adopting the emendation *ráms* ‘strong’, the manuscript reading *rás* is emended to *hrás*, the sense would be ‘sappy’, ‘young’, but the line would lack alliteration.
- 236 Presumably by carving runes on them. The preposition *á* might have instrumental force here: ‘*by using* the roots’ (an interpretation that raises the possibility of poisoning). Alternatively, *á* may reflect a belief that the act of carving a spell in harmful runes on roots was indistinguishable from the concomitant wounding of the spell’s victim; hence the injury could be said to occur ‘*on* the roots’.
- 237 Literally ‘hatreds’.
- 238 This line’s alliteration (*sjaunda ... sé*) appears faulty, as the verb *sé* ought not to take precedence over adjectives and nouns unless displaced from its normal syntactic position.
- 239 Or ‘home-meadow riders’. This refers to evil women who were believed to sit astride fences or gates at night, or to ride over the home meadows of farms.
- 240 Whereas the *túnriður* are female, in *peir villir fara* ‘they go astray/wild’ the first two words are grammatically masc. (fem. would be **pær villar fara*). If not a mistake, this might indicate that their straying involved an actual or, if they are mentally confused, self-perceived change of gender.

- 241 The interpretation of the second part of this stanza is disputed, but it ‘clearly refers to the well-evidenced Norse belief that a person’s soul (*hugr*) could in certain circumstances depart temporarily from his body and range abroad by itself, sometimes taking on a new physical shape (*hamr*), while the owner’s body lay in a trance’ (Evans, *Hávamál*, p. 140). It may be that Óðinn knows a shamanistic spell which causes the females’ external, flying souls to get lost when they try to return to their normal bodies and states of mind, and which, by preventing or greatly delaying this return, destroys these women.
- 242 Or they journey ‘triumphantly’.
- 243 I.e., the corpse of a man hanged with a halter round his neck.
- 244 Or ‘thane’, ‘man’. Comparably, perhaps, new-born babies are splashed with water in several Icelandic sagas in a kind of heathen rite similar in this respect to Christian baptism.
- 245 Or ‘comes into (i.e., joins) an army’.
- 246 Or ‘gods’.
- 247 *Bjóðreyrir* may mean ‘One of the Great Stone-Heap’ or ‘Great One of the Stone Heap’; he is otherwise unknown. If this Old Norse line contains alliteration, it is of an unorthodox type.
- 248 In Old Norse literature, dwarves are several times imagined standing by stony doors (cf. *Vsp.* 50). *SnEGylf* (10, p. 13), following *Vm.* 25, identifies *Dellingr* ‘Descendant of Brightness’ as the father of *Dagr* ‘Day’ and of the kindred of the Æsir. *Dellingr* also appears amid a list of apparently dwarven builders in *Fj.* 34.
- 249 Or ‘gods’.
- 250 Or ‘advancement’, ‘profit’, ‘ability’, ‘prowess’.
- 251 An alias of Óðinn in which *-týr* means ‘god’; the meaning of *Hropta-* (like the Óðinn-alias *Hroptr*) is uncertain; perhaps ‘God of Hidden Things’.
- 252 This line and the rest of this stanza are arguably misplaced, having originally come after st. 163. If so, the bulk of st. 162 has been lost.
- 253 I.e., the eighteenth song.
- 254 As far as we know, Óðinn had no sister.
- 255 A taunting, enigmatic conclusion, which might reflect the fact that, although useful but largely mundane advice is given in *Háv.* 1–145, Óðinn’s magical knowledge in *Háv.* 146–63 is tantalizingly withheld from—and therefore useless to—Loddfáfnir and the ‘sons of men’ (i.e., humans). In R, a later hand has inserted a marginal correction of the second instance of *ýta* ‘of men/humans’ to *jötma* ‘of giants’, a change adopted by many subsequent editors; this emendation might, however, have been mistakenly prompted by the appearance, in the outer margin of the facing leaf in R (fol. 8r), of the same word, *jötna*, as a justified emendation of *alda* ‘of men’ in *Vm.* 16, perhaps encouraged by *Háv.*’s account of how the giants lost the mead of poetry to Óðinn. Then again, if *jötna* is accepted in *Háv.* 164, it might allude to Loddfáfnir’s potential association with the man-turned-dragon Fáfnir, who is called a *jötunn* ‘giant’ in *Fm.* 29.
- 256 Cf. Hár’s parting words to Gylfi in *SnEGylf* (53, p. 54): ‘Ok njóttu nú sem þú namt’ “And now profit from that which [or ‘to the extent that’?] you have learnt!”

Vafþrúðnismál

Vafþrúðnismál (*Vm.*) ‘The Sayings of Vafþrúðnir’ is found complete in **R** (fol. 7v–8v). Stt. 20 (partial) to 55 also appear in **A** (fol. 3r–v), between *Skírnismál* (this manuscript’s name for *FSk.*) and *Grm.*; the previous folio of this manuscript is lost. Nine stanzas from *Vm.* are quoted and others paraphrased in *SnEGylf*.

The poem is mainly in *ljóðaháttir*, a common Eddic metre for dialogues, though sometimes in a lengthened form (as in stt. ?38, 55). *Ljóðaháttir* is also used for the poem’s only narrative stanza (5). Stt. 42–43 show the expanded type called *galdralag*.

Vm.’s date of composition is uncertain, as is the case for all the poems in this book. Although some metrical features may suggest a fairly early date and the poem’s subject matter suggests a predominantly heathen milieu, the possibility exists that it is wholly or partly an antiquarian work from the Christian period. It is most likely of Norwegian or Icelandic origin.

This is the third poem in **R** to concern Óðinn and giantish wisdom: in *Vsp.* the god seeks wisdom from a seeress raised by the giants; in *Háv.* he gains the mead of poetry and mighty incantations from the giants. Although in *Vm.* Óðinn’s declared motivations are a desire merely to test his wisdom against Vafþrúðnir and to see this giant’s hall, his final questions about the future suggest that here, too, he seeks information to help him avert his fate or cast doubt on its inevitability.

The poem consists mainly of two dialogues (1–4, 6–55). In the first, Óðinn asks for, but pays no heed to, advice from his wife, Frigg, regarding his proposed journey to Vafþrúðnir’s hall. As in *Vsp.* 53, Frigg seems genuinely concerned for her husband. Nonetheless, their difference of opinion might broadly reflect marital tension that is explicit elsewhere. Most notably, in the prologue to *Grm.*, Óðinn and Frigg foster different contenders for the throne, and Óðinn is tortured at his wife’s instigation. More distantly, in the seventh-century *Origo gentis Langobardum* ‘Origin of the Langobardic People’, and again in Paul the Deacon’s eighth-century *Historia Langobardum* ‘History of the Langobards’, Godan (equivalent to Óðinn) and his wife Frea (equivalent to Frigg) support opposing sides in a battle between Langobards and Vandals.

The second dialogue is a question-and-answer series between Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir about wisdom—an ancient genre with medieval representatives such as *BDr.* and the Old English dialogues of Solomon and Saturn. More precisely, it is a contest of wits, and so may broadly be compared to Old Norse flytings, such as that between Óðinn and Þórr in *Hrbl.* and between Loki and the gods in *Ls.* Aspects of this dialogue also merit comparison with other Old Norse texts, especially *Grm.*, the *Gátur Gestumblinda*

'Riddles of Gestumblindi' in the thirteenth-century *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* 'Saga of Hervor and Heiðrekr', and, if a recent interpretation is broadly correct, an obscure (and partly Eddic) inscription on the c. 800 Rök runestone from Sweden.¹ The dialogue of Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir, however, is unknown outside this poem and derived passages in *SnEGylf*—as is the giant himself, except for his inclusion in a *pula* 'versified list of names' appended to *SnESkáld* (SPSMA III, 715).

In *Grm.* the antagonism between Óðinn and Frigg is followed, as in *Vm.*, by the threat of physical harm to Óðinn. The god—disguised as so often in Old Norse literature—is tortured between two fires by King Geirrøðr, the namesake of a famous giant. Óðinn enumerates much mythological lore, including a wealth of names, and at last declares his true identity. Upon hearing this, Geirrøðr tries to take Óðinn from the fires, but it is too late—the king stumbles and falls upon his sword. In *Vm.* death similarly awaits Vafþrúðnir for his failure to recognize his opponent.

In *Gátur Gestumblindi*, Óðinn, disguised as *Gestumblindi* 'Blind/Hidden Guest', engages in a riddle contest to escape the judgement of King Heiðrekr's wise men. The riddles are unlike the questions of *Vm.*, except for Gestumblindi's last, which is not a true riddle: 'What did Óðinn say in Baldr's ear before he was carried to the fire?' This is also Óðinn's last question in *Vm.*, and again it results in an epiphany: 'Only you know that, wicked creature!' Heiðrekr draws his sword and strikes at Óðinn, who has turned himself into a hawk. As a result, Óðinn loses his tailfeathers, but Heiðrekr, rather than dying upon his own sword (as was probably the case in an earlier version of the story) lives on—for the moment.

Alv. also furnishes a useful parallel. In this poem, Þórr, in an uncharacteristically Óðinn-like role, lures the dwarf *Alvíss* 'All-Wise' into a vain display of linguistic terminology; the dwarf's claim to Þórr's foster(?)-daughter will supposedly be upheld if he tells Þórr everything he wants to know. However, Álviss, like Vafþrúðnir, excels in hollow nomenclature, rather than wisdom. Rather as the giant fails to recognize Óðinn despite numerous hints, so the dwarf fails to notice that day has dawned while he has been talking, whereupon, we are probably to understand, the sun turned him to stone.

As Snorri's considerable use of *Vm.* in his *Prose Edda* suggests, the poem has great value as a source of, and guide to, Norse mythology, from the Creation to Ragnarok and its aftermath, especially as it appears largely free of editorialization and Christianization.² Clive Tolley observes that *Vm.* can be loosely categorized as a 'cosmic history', and warrants comparison with *Vsp.*'s tighter treatment of the same

1 It includes a series of numbered questions and some passages may be concerned with mythological matters relating to the sun and the moon, Óðinn (*Yggr*) and Ragnarok—interests shared with *Vm.*. See P. Holmberg, B. Gräslund, O. Sundqvist and H. Williams, 'The Rök Runestone and the End of the World', *Futhark: International Journal of Runic Studies* 9–10 (2018–19), 7–38, <https://doi.org/10.33063/diva-401040>, the argument of which is refined in P. Holmberg, 'Rök Runestone Riddles Revisited', *Maal og Minne* 112 (2020), 37–55.

2 An exception may be the apocalyptic *surtalogi* 'dark flame' of stt. 50–51.

concerns and with *Grm.*'s 'cosmic description'.³ The differences from *Vsp.*'s accounts of the creation of the world and of life after Ragnarok demonstrate the diversity of Norse mythology.

Synopsis

Óðinn asks his wife, Frigg, for advice about his desire to test his wisdom against the wise giant Vafþrúðnir (1). She tries to dissuade him, because Vafþrúðnir is the most powerful of giants (2). He nevertheless persists (3). She wishes him luck and strength of mind (4).

Óðinn travels to Vafþrúðnir's hall and enters (5). After some unfriendly introductory words in which Óðinn, disguised as *Gagnráðr* 'Contrary (or Gainful) Counsellor', challenges his host's wisdom, and is in turn threatened with death unless he proves the wiser (6–10), Vafþrúðnir asks him four questions about mythological names, all of which he answers (11–18). Vafþrúðnir then tells Óðinn to take a seat on the bench and instigates a formal death-match: they will wager their heads upon their wisdom (19).

The rest of the poem comprises Óðinn's eighteen questions (the first twelve of which are numbered) for Vafþrúðnir on mythological topics and the giant's answers. Óðinn asks ten questions about the origins of the earth and sky, the moon and sun, day and night, summer and winter, the giants, the wind and the god Njörðr, all of which Vafþrúðnir answers (20–39). His answer to the last alludes to Ragnarok, which, together with its aftermath, is the theme of Óðinn's next seven questions, all of which Vafþrúðnir again answers (40–53). Finally, Óðinn asks what he said in his son Baldr's ear before Baldr was burnt on the pyre (54). Only Óðinn knows this, so Vafþrúðnir, at last recognizing his adversary, concedes defeat (55).

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³ C. Tolley, 'The Adaptability of Myth in Old Norse and Finnish Poetry', in G. Barnes and M. Clunies Ross, ed., *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society: Proceedings of the 11th International Saga Conference 2–7 July 2000, University of Sydney* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2000), pp. 498–510 at 508–9.

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Vafþrúðnismál

Óðinn kvað:

1. 'Ráð þú mér nú, Frigg, allz mik fara tiðir
at vitja Vafþrúðnis;
forvitni mikla kveð ek mér á fornum stófum
við þann inn alsvinna jötun!'

Frigg kvað:

2. 'Heima letja ek mynda Herjaföðr
í góðum goða,
þvíat engi jötun ek hugða jafnramman
sem Vafþrúðni vera!'

Óðinn kvað:

3. 'Fjolð ek fór, fjolð ek freistaða,
fjolð ek reynda regin;
hitt vil ek vita, hvé Vafþrúðnis
salakynni sé.'

Frigg kvað:

4. 'Heill þú farir, heill þú aptr komir,
heill þú á sinnum sér!
Æði þér dugi, hvars þú skalt, Aldaföðr,
orðum mæla jötun!'

5. Fór þá Óðinn at freista orðspeki
þess ins alsvinna jötuns;
at höllu hann kom, ok átti Íms faðir,
inn gekk Ygg ręgar.

Óðinn kvað:

6. 'Heill þú nú, Vafþrúðnir! Nú em ek í höll kominn,
á þik sjálfan at sjá;
hitt vil ek fyrst vita, ef þú fróðr sér
eða alsviðr, jötunn!'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

7. 'Hvat er þat manna, er í mínum sal
verpumk orði á?
Út þú né kómir órum höllum frá,
nema þú inn snotrari sér!'

The Sayings of Vafþrúðnir

Óðinn said:

1. 'Advise me now, Frigg,¹ since I want to go
to visit Vafþrúðnir,²
I declare my great curiosity to contend in ancient staves³
with the all-wise giant!'

Frigg said:

2. 'I would keep Herjafǫðr⁴ at home
in the courts of the gods,
for I have considered no giant to be as strong
as Vafþrúðnir!'

Óðinn said:

3. 'Much have I travelled, much have I tried,
much have I tested the powers;⁵
I want to know this,
what Vafþrúðnir's household is like.'

Frigg said:

4. 'May you travel safe, may you come back safe,
may you be safe in your fellowship!
May your mind be strong,⁶ Aldafǫðr,⁷
wherever you have to speak words to a giant!'

5. Then Óðinn went to test the word-wisdom
of that one, of the all-wise giant;
he came to a hall, and Ímr's father owned it;⁸
Yggr⁹ went in at once.

Óðinn said:

6. 'Hail to you now, Vafþrúðnir! Now I have come into your hall
to see you yourself;
I want to know this first, whether you are knowledgeable¹⁰
or all-wise, giant!'

Vafþrúðnir said:

7. 'What kind of man is it at whom
I shall hurl speech in *my* house?
May you not come out from our halls,
unless you are the wiser!'

Óðinn kvað:

8. 'Gagnráðr ek heiti; nú emk af göngu kominn
þyrstr til þinna sala;
laðar þurfi hefi ek lengi farit
ok þinna andfanga, jötunn!'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

9. 'Hví þú þá, Gagnráðr, mælist af gólfí fyrir?
Farðu í sess í sal!
Þá skal freista, hvárr fleira viti,
gestr eða inn gamli þulr.'

Óðinn kvað:

10. 'Óauðigr maðr, er til auðigs kómr,
mæli þarf eða þegi;
ofrmælgi mikil hygg ek at illa geti,
hveim er við kaldrifjaðan kómr.'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

11. 'Segðu mér, Gagnráðr, allz þú á gólfí vill
þíns um freista frama,
hvé sá hestr heitir er hverjan dregr
dag of dróttmogu.'

Óðinn kvað:

12. 'Skinfaxi heitir, er inn skíra dregr
dag um dróttmogu;
hesta beztr þykkir hann með Hreiðgotum,
ey lýsir mōn af mari.'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

13. 'Segðu þat, Gagnráðr, allz þú á gólfí vill
þíns um freista frama,
hvé sá jór heitir er austan dregr
nótt of nýt regin.'

Óðinn kvað:

14. 'Hrímfaxi heitir, er hverja dregr
nótt of nýt regin;
méldropa fellir hann morgin hvern,
þaðan kómr dögg um dala.'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

15. 'Segðu þat, Gagnráðr, allz þú á gólfí vill
þíns um freista frama,
hvé sú á heitir er deilir með jötna sonum
grund ok með goðum.'

Óðinn said:

8. 'I'm called Gagnráðr,¹¹ I've come thirsty now from
my journey to your halls;¹²
I have travelled long in need of an invitation
and your hospitality, giant!'

Vafþrúðnir said:

9. 'Why then, Gagnráðr, do you speak before [me] from the floor?
Go to a seat in the hall!
Then it shall be tested, which of us two knows more,
the guest¹³ or the ancient sage.'¹⁴

Óðinn said:

10. 'A poor man, when he comes to a rich man's house,
should say something useful or be silent;¹⁵
I think excessive talking¹⁶ ill rewards
whoever comes up against a cold-ribbed one.'¹⁷

Vafþrúðnir said:

11. 'Tell me, Gagnráðr, since you want to test
your talent on the floor,
what the horse is called which hauls
each day over host-men.'¹⁸

Óðinn said:

12. 'He's called Skinfaxi,¹⁹ who hauls the shining
day over host-men;
he's thought the best of horses among the Hreiðgotar,²⁰
light always shines from the steed's mane.'²¹

Vafþrúðnir said:

13. 'Say this,²² Gagnráðr, since you want to test
your talent on the floor,
what the horse is called which hauls night
from the east over the able powers.'²³

Óðinn said:

14. 'He's called Hrímfaxi,²⁴ who hauls each
night over the able powers;
he lets bit-drops²⁵ fall each morning,
from there comes dew over dales.'²⁶

Vafþrúðnir said:

15. 'Say this, Gagnráðr, since you want to test
your talent on the floor,
what the river is called which divides the earth
among the sons of giants and among the gods.'

Óðinn kvað:

16. 'Ífing heitir á, er deilir með jötna sonum
grund ok með goðum;
opin renna hon skal um aldrdaga,
verðrat íss á á.'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

17. 'Segðu þat, Gagnráðr, allz þú á gólfí vill
þíns um freista frama,
hvé sá vøllr heitir er finnask vígi at
Surtr ok in svásu goð.'

Óðinn kvað:

18. 'Vígríðr heitir vøllr, er finnask vígi at
Surtr ok in svásu goð;
hundrað rasta hann er á hverjan veg —
sá er þeim vøllr vitaðr.'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

19. 'Fróðr ertu nú, gestr! Far þú á bekk jötuns,
ok mælumk í sessi saman;
hofti veðja vit skulum høllu í,
gestr, um geðspeki!'

Capitulum

Óðinn kvað:

20. 'Segðu þat it eina, ef þitt œði dugir
ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir:
hvaðan jørð um kom eða upphiminn
fyrst, inn fróði jötunn.'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

21. 'Ór Ymis holdi var jørð um sköpuð,
en ór beinum bjørg,
himinn ór hausi ins hrímkalda jötuns,
en ór sveita sjór.'

Óðinn kvað:

22. 'Segðu þat annat, ef þitt œði dugir
ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir:
hvaðan Máni um kom, svá at ferr menn yfir,
eða Sól it sama.'

Óðinn said:

16. 'The river's called Ífing²⁷ which divides the earth
among the sons of giants and among the gods;
it shall run freely during life-days,²⁸
ice doesn't form on the river.'²⁹

Vafþrúðnir said:

17. 'Say this, Gagnráðr, since you want to test
your talent on the floor,
what the field is called on which Surtr³⁰ and the sweet gods
will encounter each other in battle.'

Óðinn said:

18. 'The field's called Vígríðr³¹ on which Surtr and the sweet gods
will encounter each other in battle;
it's a hundred leagues in every direction —
that's the field determined for them.'³²

Vafþrúðnir said:

19. 'You're wise now, guest! Go to the giant's bench,
and let's talk together on the seat;
we two shall wager our heads in the hall,
guest, on mind-wisdom!'

Capitulum³³

Óðinn said:

20. 'Say this as the first thing, if your mind is strong
and you, Vafþrúðnir, know:
whence the earth and sky above
first came, O wise giant.'

Vafþrúðnir said:

21. 'From Ymir's flesh the earth was formed,
and from his bones boulders,
the sky from the skull of the frost-cold giant,
and from his "sweat"³⁴ the sea.'³⁵

Óðinn said:

22. 'Say this secondly, if your mind is strong
and you, Vafþrúðnir, know:
whence Máni³⁶ came, so that he journeys over men,
and Sól³⁷ the same.'

- Vafþrúðnir kvað:
23. 'Mundilfceri heitir, hann er Mána faðir,
ok svá Sólar it sama;
himin hverfa þau skulu hverjan dag,
oldum at ártali.'
- Óðinn kvað:
24. 'Segðu þat it þriðja, allz þik svinnan kveða,
ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir,
hvaðan Dagr um kom, sá er ferr drótt yfir,
eða Nótt með niðum.'
- Vafþrúðnir kvað:
25. 'Dellingr heitir, hann er Dags faðir,
en Nótt var Nørvi borin;
ný ok nið skópu nýt regin
oldum at ártali.'
- Óðinn kvað:
26. 'Segðu þat it fjórða, allz þik fróðan kveða,
ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir:
hvaðan Vetr um kom eða varmt Sumar
fyrst með fróð regin.'
- Vafþrúðnir kvað:
27. 'Vindsvalr heitir, hann er Vetrar faðir,
en Svásuðr Sumars.'
- Óðinn kvað:
28. 'Segðu þat it fimmta, allz þik fróðan kveða,
ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir:
hverr Ása elztr eða Ymis niðja
yrði í árdaga.'
- Vafþrúðnir kvað:
29. 'Ørófi vetra áðr væri jorð skópuð,
þá var Bergelmir borinn;
Prúðgelmir var þess faðir,
en Aurgelmir afi.'
- Óðinn kvað:
30. 'Segðu þat it sétta, allz þik svinnan kveða,
ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir:
hvaðan Aurgelmir kom með jötuna sonum
fyrst, inn fróði jötunn.'

23. Vafþrúðnir said:
 'He's called Mundilfæri,³⁸ he's the father of Máni,
 and of Sól the same;
 they must turn the sky each day,
 as a year-reckoning for men.'³⁹

24. Óðinn said:
 'Say this as the third thing, since they call you wise,
 and you, Vafþrúðnir, may know:
 whence Dagr⁴⁰ came, the one who travels over men,
 and Nótt⁴¹ with dark moons.'⁴²

25. Vafþrúðnir said:
 'He's called Dellingr,⁴³ he's the father of Dagr,
 but Nótt was born to Njorr;⁴⁴
 the able powers made full moon⁴⁵ and dark moon⁴⁶
 as a year-reckoning for men.'

26. Óðinn said:
 'Say this as the fourth thing, since they call you wise,
 and you, Vafþrúðnir, may know:
 whence Vetr⁴⁷ and warm Sumar⁴⁸
 first came among the wise⁴⁹ gods.'

27. Vafþrúðnir said:
 'He's called Windsvalr,⁵⁰ he's the father of Vetr,
 and Svásuðr⁵¹ of Sumar.'⁵²

28. Óðinn said:
 'Say this as the fifth thing, since they call you wise,
 and you, Vafþrúðnir, may know:
 who was the oldest of the Æsir⁵³ or of Ymir's kin⁵⁴
 in early days.'

29. Vafþrúðnir said:
 'Countless years before the earth was created,
 then Bergelmir was born;
 Brúðgelmir was the father of that one,
 and Aurgelmir his grandfather.'⁵⁵

30. Óðinn said:
 'Say this as the sixth thing, since they call you wise,
 and you, Vafþrúðnir, may know:
 from where Aurgelmir first came with the sons of giants,
 O wise giant.'⁵⁶

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

31. 'Ór Élivágum stukku eitrdropar,
svá óx unz varð ór jötunn;
þar órar ættir kvómu allar saman,
því er þat æ allt til atalt.'

Óðinn kvað:

32. 'Segðu þat it sjaunda, allz þík svinnan kveða,
ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir:
hvé sá børn gat, inn baldni jötunn,
er hann hafðit gýgjar gaman.'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

33. 'Undir hendi vaxa kváðu hrímþursi
mey ok mógr saman;
fótr við fæti gat ins fróða jötuns
sexhöfðaðan son.'

Óðinn kvað:

34. 'Segðu þat it átta, allz þík svinnan kveða,
ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir:
hvat þú fyrst mant eða fremst um veitz,
þú ert alsviðr, jötunn!'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

35. 'Ørófi vetra áðr væri jorð um skópuð,
þá var Bergelmir borinn;
þat ek fyrst um man, er sá inn fróði jötunn
var á lúðr um lagiðr.'

Óðinn kvað:

36. 'Segðu þat it níunda, allz þík svinnan kveða,
ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir:
hvaðan vindr um kómr, svá at ferr vág yfir,
æ menn hann sjálfan um sjá.'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

37. 'Hræsvelgr heitir, er sitr á himins enda,
jötunn í arnar ham;
af hans vængjum kveða vind koma
alla menn yfir.'

Óðinn kvað:

38. 'Segðu þat it tíunda, allz þú tíva rök
qlí, Vafþrúðnir, vitir:
hvaðan Njorðr um kom með Ása sonum;
hofum ok hörgum hann ræðr hunnmögum,
ok varðat hann Ásum alinn.'

31. Vafþrúðnir said:
‘From Élivágar⁵⁷ venom-drops sprang out,
[and] so grew until a giant emerged therefrom,⁵⁸
 all our families came from there,
 which is why they are always too fierce.’⁵⁹
32. Óðinn said:
‘Say this as the seventh thing, since they call you wise,
 and you, Vafþrúðnir, may know:
 how he begot children, that bold giant,
 when he didn’t have a giantess’s love-play.’
33. Vafþrúðnir said:
‘They said that under the frost-giant’s arm grew
 a girl and a boy together;
 leg upon leg⁶⁰ of the wise⁶¹ giant begot
 a six-headed son.’⁶²
34. Óðinn said:
‘Say this as the eighth thing, since they call you wise,
 and you, Vafþrúðnir, may know:
what you first remember or know from farthest back,⁶³
 you are all-knowing, giant!’
35. Vafþrúðnir said:
‘Countless years before the earth was created,
 then Bergelmir was born;
the first thing I remember was when that wise⁶⁴ giant
 was laid on a mill-frame.’⁶⁵
36. Óðinn said:
‘Say this as the ninth thing, since they call you wise,
 and you, Vafþrúðnir, may know:
whence the wind comes, so that it moves over wave,
 people never see it itself.’
37. Vafþrúðnir said:
‘He’s called Hræsvelgr, who sits at the sky’s end,⁶⁶
 a giant in eagle’s shape;
 from his wings, they say, the wind comes
 over all people.’⁶⁷
38. Óðinn said:
‘Say this as the tenth thing, since you, Vafþrúðnir,
 may know all the fates of the gods:
whence Njörðr⁶⁸ came among the sons of the Æsir,⁶⁹
 he rules a hundred temples and altars,⁷⁰
 and he was not born to the Æsir.’

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

39. 'Í Vanaheimi skópu hann vís regin,
ok seldu at gíslingu goðum;
í aldar rök hann mun aprt koma
heim með vísum Vönum.'

Óðinn kvað:

40. 'Segðu þat it ellipta: hvar ýtar túnum í
hoggvask hverjan dag.'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

41. 'Allir einherjar Óðins túnum í
hoggvask hverjan dag;
val þeir kjósa ok riða vígi frá,
sitja meirr um sáttir saman.'

Óðinn kvað:

42. 'Segðu þat it tólfta, hví þú tíva rök
óll, Vafþrúðnir, vitir;
frá jötuna rúnum ok allra goða
segir þú it sannasta,
inn alsvinni jötunn.'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

43. 'Frá jötuna rúnum ok allra goða
ek kann segja satt,
þvíat hvern hefi ek heim um komit;
níú kom ek heima fyr Niflhel neðan,
hinig deyja ór Helju halir.'

Óðinn kvað:

44. 'Fjolð ek fór, fjolð ek freistaðak,
fjolð ek reynda regin:
hvati lifir manna, þá er inn mæra líðr
Fimbulvetr með firum?'

Vafþrúðnir kvað:

45. 'Líf ok Lífðrasir, en þau leynask munu
í holti Hoddmímis;
morgindoggvar þau sér at mat hafa,
þaðan af aldir alask.'

Óðinn kvað:

46. 'Fjolð ek fór, fjolð ek freistaðak,
fjolð ek reynda regin:
hvaðan kœmr Sól á inn sléttu himin,
þá er þessa hefir Fenrir farit?'

39. Vafþrúðnir said:
 'In Vanaheimr⁷¹ wise powers created him,
 and gave him as a hostage to the gods;⁷²
 at the age's end he will come back
 home among wise Vanir.'⁷³

40. Óðinn said:
 'Say this as the eleventh thing:
 where men fight each other in enclosed fields⁷⁴ every day

41. Vafþrúðnir said:
 'All the unique champions in Óðinn's enclosed fields
 fight each other every day;
 they choose the slain and ride from battle;⁷⁵
 thereafter they sit together in peace.'⁷⁶

42. Óðinn said:
 'Say this as the twelfth thing: how you,⁷⁸
 Vafþrúðnir, may know all the fates of the gods;
 about the secrets⁷⁹ of giants and of all gods
 you tell the absolute truth,⁸⁰
 O all-wise giant.'

43. Vafþrúðnir said:
 'About the secrets of giants and of all gods
 I can tell the truth,
 because I have come to each world;
 I came to nine worlds beneath Niflhel,⁸¹
 humans die there from Hel.'⁸²

44. Óðinn said:
 'Much have I travelled, much have I tried,
 much have I tested the powers;
 which people will live when the famous Fimbulvetr⁸³
 moves among men?'⁸⁴

45. Vafþrúðnir said:
 'Líf and Lífrasir,⁸⁵ and they will hide themselves
 in Hoddmímir's wood,⁸⁶
 morning-dews they will have for their food,⁸⁷
 from there human beings will be born.'⁸⁸

46. Óðinn said:
 'Much have I travelled, much have I tried,
 much have I tested the powers;
 whence will Sól⁸⁹ come [back] to the smooth sky,
 once Fenrir has destroyed this one?'

- Vafþrúðnir kvað:
47. 'Eina dóttur berr Álfrqðull,
 áðr hana Fenrir fari;
 sú skal ríða, þá er regin deyja,
 móður brautir mær.'
- Óðinn kvað:
48. 'Fjolð ek fór, fjolð ek freistaðak,
 fjolð ek reynda regin:
 hverjar ru þær meyar er líða mar yfir,
 fróðgeðjaðar fara?'
- Vafþrúðnir kvað:
49. 'Þrjár þjóðár falla þorp yfir
 meyja Mögþrasis;
 hamingjur einar þeira í heimi eru,
 þó þær með jötnum alask.'
- Óðinn kvað:
50. 'Fjolð ek fór, fjolð ek freistaðak,
 fjolð ek reynda regin:
 hverir ráða Æsir eignum goða,
 þá er sloknar surtalogi?'
- Vafþrúðnir kvað:
51. 'Víðarr ok Váli byggja vé goða,
 þá er sloknar surtalogi;
 Móði ok Magni skulu Mjöllni hafa
 ok vinna at vígþroti.'
- Óðinn kvað:
52. 'Fjolð ek fór, fjolð ek freistaðak,
 fjolð ek reynda regin:
 hvat verðr Óðni at aldrlagi,
 þá er rjúfask regin?'
- Vafþrúðnir kvað:
53. 'Úlfr gleypa mun Aldafqðör,
 þess mun Víðarr vreka;
 kalda kjàpta hann klyfja mun
 viðnis vígi at.'
- Óðinn kvað:
54. 'Fjolð ek fór, fjolð ek freistaðak,
 fjolð ek reynda regin:
 hvat mælti Óðinn, áðr á bál stigi,
 sjálfr, í eyra syni?'

- Vafþrúðnir said:
47. 'Álfraqðull⁹¹ will bear one daughter
before Fenrir destroys her;
that girl must ride, when the powers die,
the paths of her mother.'⁹²

- Óðinn said:
48. 'Much have I travelled, much have I tried,
much have I tested the powers;
who are those maidens who move over the sea,
journey with wise minds?'⁹³

- Vafþrúðnir said:
49. 'Three mighty rivers fall over the village
of the maidens of Mǫgþrasir,'⁹⁴
their guardian-spirits are alone in the world(?),⁹⁵
though they⁹⁶ are born among the giants.'

- Óðinn said:
50. 'Much have I travelled, much have I tried,
much have I tested the powers;
which Æsir⁹⁷ will rule the gods' possessions,
when the dark flame⁹⁸ has died?'

- Vafþrúðnir said:
51. 'Víðarr and Váli will settle in the gods' sanctuaries
when the dark flame dies,'⁹⁹
Móði and Magni¹⁰⁰ will have Mjöllnir¹⁰¹
and work at the war's end.¹⁰²

- Óðinn said:
52. 'Much have I travelled, much have I tried,
much have I tested the powers;
what will bring Óðinn to his life's end,
when the powers are ripped apart?'

- Vafþrúðnir said:
53. 'The wolf will swallow Aldafqðr,¹⁰³
Víðarr will avenge this,¹⁰⁴
he will cleave the cold jaws
of the wolf in battle.'¹⁰⁵

- Óðinn said:
54. 'Much have I travelled, much have I tried,
much have I tested the powers;
what did Óðinn say, before he stepped onto the pyre,¹⁰⁶
himself, into his son's ear?'¹⁰⁷

55. Vafþrúðnir kvað:
‘Ey manni þat veit, hvat þú í árdaga
sagðir í eyra syni;
feigum munni mælda ek mína forna stafi
ok um ragna rök.
Nú ek við Óðin deildak mína orðspeki;
þú ert æ vísastr vera!’

55. Vafþrúðnir said:
 'No one knows that, what you in early days¹⁰⁸
 said in your son's ear;
with a doomed mouth have I have spoken my ancient staves¹⁰⁹
 and about the doom of the powers.
 Now I have shared my word-wisdom with Óðinn;
 you are always the wisest of beings!'¹¹⁰

Textual Apparatus to *Vafþrúðnismál*

Vafþrúðnismál] The title is rubricated but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this edition therefore relies on the transcription therein

Speech directions (e.g., *Óðinn kvað* ‘Óðinn said’) appear in both R and A, but are lacking in R for stt. 1–17

1/1 *Ráð*] The first letter is large, inset and rubricated (but faded) in R

2/5 *jafnramman*] R *iafnrammann*

4/5 *skalt*] R *scalt* or

11/6 *of*] R *oc*

12/5 *Hreiðgotum*] R *reið gotom*

13/2–3 *allz þú á gólfí vill þíns um freista frama*] In R greatly abbreviated (so too in stt. 15 and 17); expanded on the model of st. 11

13/6 *of*] R *oc*

14/3 *of*] R *oc*

16/2 *jötna*] R written in the outer margin as a correction of *alda* ‘of men’

Capitulum] Rubricated

20/2 *æði*] A’s text begins with this word

20/3 *ok*] A .æ. (abbreviation for *eða*)

22/2–3] R and A abbreviated

22/4 *um*] A *of*

23/1 *Mundilfæri*] A *Mvndilfæri*

24/3 *ok*] A .æ. (abbreviation for *eða*)

24/5 *drótt*] so A; R *drot*

25/3 *Nótt*] so A; R *not*

26/2–3] R and A abbreviated here and subsequently

26/6 *með*] A *vm*

29/2 *jorð*] A *iorð* *vm*

29/3 *var*] A absent

30/2 *svinnan*] A *f.* (abbreviation for *froðan*)

31/3] *varð ór*] A *or* *vard*

31/4–6] R and A absent; lines supplied after Machan, *Vafþrúðnismál*, 64, 88 from *SnEGylf*, one manuscript of which has *komnar* ‘have come’ for *komu*

32/5 *baldni*] R *aldni* ‘old’, here emended for alliteration; A *balldni*

33/4 *fótr*] A *fot*

33/5 *gat*] A absent

33/6 *sexhofðaðan*] so **A**; **R** *ser hofðapann*

34/2 *svinnan*] **R** and **A** *f* (abbreviation for *fróðan* ‘wise’), here amended for alliteration

34/4 *fyrst*] **A** *fyrst of*

34/5 *fremst*] **A** *fræms*

34/5 *um*] **A** *of*

35/4 *um*] **A** *of*

35/6 *var á*] **A** *a var*

36/3 *ok*] **R** *e* (abbreviation for *eða*)

36/5 *svá at*] **A** *sa ær* ‘the one which’

36/6 *æ ... sjá*] **A** *æ. maðr vm sialfan hann sær* ‘one never sees it itself’

37/4 *hans*] so **A**; **R** *haN*

38/4 *um*] **A** *of*

38/8 *vardat*] **A** *varat* ‘was not’

39/5 *hann mun*] **A** *mvn hann*

40/1–3] Stanza incomplete in **R** and **A**, the latter having only 40/1

41/1 *einherjar*] **A** *eins hæriar*

41/1–3] **R** absent; supplied from **A** and *SnEGylf*

42/1 *þat*] **A** absent

43/4 *um*] **A** *of*

44/2 *freistaðak*] **A** *fræistaða*

44/3 *ek*] **A** *ec of*

45/1 *Lífðrasir*] **A** and some manuscripts of *SnEGylf* have *Læifbrasir* ‘Persistent Remnant’, ‘Enduring Survival’; another *SnEGylf* variant is *Leidþrasir* ‘Persistent Way’

45/3 *holti*] **A** *holldi* ‘flesh’

45/6 *þaðan*] **A** (also manuscripts of *SnEGylf*) *ænn þaðan*

46/1–3] **R** and **A** abbreviated here and subsequently

46/6 *þá*] **R** *þa þa*

49/5 *þeira*] **A** *þær ær*

51/6 *ok vinna*] **A** (and manuscripts of *SnEGylf*) *Vingnis*

53/3 *vreka*] **R** *reca*; **A** *ræka*

53/6 *vitnis*] so **A**; **R** *vingnis*

54/5 *stigi*] **A** *stigi ok*

55/5 *ek*] **A** *æk um*

55/6 *um*] **A** *o*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 Óðinn's wife, a goddess.
- 2 Vafþrúðnir is a giant whose name might mean 'Wrapping/Entanglement-Powerful One' or 'Hesitation-Mighty One'. Except for a reference preceding a quotation from *Vm.* in *SnEGylf* (5, p. 10) and the inclusion of his name in a versified list of giant-names (*SPSMA* III, 715), he appears nowhere else.
- 3 I.e., points of wisdom, conceptually related to rune-staves (runic letters).
- 4 'Father of Armies', an alias of Óðinn.
- 5 Óðinn's frequent travelling is well-attested, but his testing of the *regin* '(ruling) powers' is not. The *regin* are presumably the gods collectively.
- 6 Or 'May your mind avail you'.
- 7 'Father of Men/Ages', an alias of Óðinn.
- 8 Ímr's father is Vafþrúðnir. Ímr 'Embers' also appears in versified lists of giant-names and has cognates in giant-names such as Ími and Ímgerðr. This line lacks alliteration, unless 'h' (dropped in pronunciation?) alliterates exceptionally with a vowel or the *Í*- in *Íms* was aspirated; it might therefore be faulty.
- 9 'Terrible/Fear-Inducing One', an alias of Óðinn.
- 10 The implication is '*merely* knowledgeable'.
- 11 'Contrary Counsellor' or 'Gain(ful) Counselor'. The name is not found elsewhere, except perhaps in a derived passage in *SnEGylf* (5, p. 10; see notes on pp. 58, 74 therein). A versified list records a similar name, *Gangráðr* 'Travel Counsellor' or 'Walk-Enjoying One'; *SPSMA* III, 739.
- 12 Arguably, Óðinn is thirsty not just for drink but also for (debate about) knowledge; the two are closely related in Old Norse mythological thought. Cf. *Ls.* 6.
- 13 Since Vafþrúðnir apparently does not yet recognize his visitor, it may be ironic that he addresses him as *gestr* 'guest', because *Gestr* is elsewhere an alias of Óðinn.
- 14 As Óðinn is probably also an old *pulr* 'sage' (cf. *Hav.* 80, 111, 134(?), 142), this term, by which Vafþrúðnir describes himself, also appears unconsciously ironic.
- 15 Cf. *Hav.* 19.
- 16 Or 'boasting'.
- 17 I.e., a giant. Frost-giants inhabited the frozen wilderness, but *kaldr* 'cold' also has connotations of malice, cunning and ill-fortune.
- 18 I.e., over warriors of an army, or over humankind.
- 19 'Shining Mane'. *SnEGylf* (10, p. 13), identifies Skinfaxi as the horse of *Dagr* 'Day' and says its mane illuminates all the sky and earth. Skinfaxi is also mentioned in a versified list of horse-names (*SPSMA* III, 935, 939). *SnEskáld* (I, 58, p. 90, and p. 211 n.) records an alternative name for this horse, or perhaps the name of its partner: *Glaðr* 'Glad'. Cf. *Grm.* 37.
- 20 'Nest/Homeland Goths', an emendation of dat. pl. *Reiðgotum* 'Riding Goths'. Here the need to restore the initial *H-* for alliteration suggests a fairly early date of composition, possibly in Norway.

- 21 This stanza is paraphrased in *SnEGylf* (9, p. 13). Cf. *Grm.* 37 (and *SnEGylf* 11, pp. 13–14), where the horses *Árvakr* ‘Early Waker’ and *Alsviðr* ‘All Swift’ drag the sun up; also *Vsp.* 5. The notion of the sun being pulled by a horse (or horses) dates from at least the early Bronze Age in northern Europe: the Danish Trundholm chariot is a model of a horse pulling a gold-plated bronze disk, arguably in a two-wheeled chariot.
- 22 Literally, ‘it’ or ‘that’.
- 23 I.e., the gods.
- 24 ‘Frost Mane’. *SnEGylf* (10, p. 13) identifies Hrímfaxi as the horse of *Nótt* ‘Night’, and says that drops of foam fall from its bit as dew on to the earth each day. Hrímfaxi is also mentioned in a versified name-list; *SPSMA III*, 939. *SnEskáld* (I, 58, p. 90, and p. 211 n.) records an alternative name for this horse, or perhaps the name of its partner: *Fjörsvartnir* ‘Life-Blackened’.
- 25 I.e., drops of foam from the horse’s bit (*mél*); alternatively, *meldropa* ‘honey-drops’, ‘honeydew’; cf. OE *meledeaw* ‘honeydew’. Note also *Vsp.* 19, as Yggdrasill was imagined as a horse-tree.
- 26 Cf. *HHv.* 28.
- 27 Or *Ifing*. The meaning might be ‘Violent One’, ‘Rippling One’ or ‘Yew River’; otherwise unknown.
- 28 I.e., forever, or at least until Ragnarok.
- 29 Possibly, if it had frozen, the giants would have been able to invade the land of the gods.
- 30 An apocalyptic fire-demon; see *Vsp.* 51.
- 31 Perhaps ‘(Place Where) Battle Rides (Out)’; otherwise unknown.
- 32 Or ‘that is the field known to them’. This stanza is quoted in *SnEGylf* (51, pp. 52–53). Cf. *Fm.* 14–15.
- 33 Latin for ‘chapter’; it marks the beginning of a new section of the poem.
- 34 Here ‘sweat’ is interpretable as a term for ‘blood’, as elsewhere.
- 35 Cf. *Grm.* 40–41, *SnEGylf* (8, pp. 11–12).
- 36 ‘Moon’.
- 37 ‘Sun’.
- 38 Cf. *SnEGylf* (11, p. 13).
- 39 In other words, as a means by which people can measure time. The key to understanding this stanza is the name *Mundilfæri*, which seems to mean ‘Mill-Handle-Mover’. Its first element, *mundil-*, looks akin to *mondull* ‘handle of a handmill’, and perhaps plays on the words *mund* ‘hand’ and *mund* ‘time’; the second element, *-færi*, probably means ‘mover’, ‘carrier’ or ‘device (for moving something)’. *Mundilfæri* might therefore denote a personified mill-like device that, when operated by Máni and Sól, turns the sky by means of a handle, the sky being imagined as the upper of two millstones, of which the lower is the earth.
- 40 ‘Day’.
- 41 ‘Night’.
- 42 A reference to the moon’s invisible (dark/new) phase or waning.
- 43 *SnEGylf* (10, p. 13) says *Dellingr*, probably ‘Gleaming One’, is of the kindred of the gods and married to Nótt.

- 44 'Narrow (One)'. Cf. *Alv.* 29. In *SnEGylf* (10, p. 13) Nött is the daughter of a giant called *Nørfi* or *Narfí*, *Nørfi* being the dat. of *Nørr*.
- 45 Or pl. ON *ný* means literally 'new moon', but the reference is to the waxing or full moon, not what is now known in English as the new moon, which is the moon during its invisible phase.
- 46 Or pl.
- 47 'Winter'.
- 48 'Summer'.
- 49 Or 'fertile'.
- 50 'Wind Cool', the name of a giant in *SnESkáld* (I, 75, p. 111). According to *SnEGylf* (19, p. 21), Vetr's father is called *Vindlóni* 'Wind Still/Stop(?)' or *Vindsvalr* 'Wind Cool'. *SnESkáld* (I, 29, p. 39) also identifies winter as the son of Vindsvalr.
- 51 Probably 'Sweet/Mild South', the name of a giant in *SnESkáld* (I, 75, p. 111). *SnEGylf* (19, p. 21) adds that 'he has such a blissful life that it is from his name that what is pleasant is called *sváslig* "delightful"'. *SnESkáld* (I, 30, p. 39) also identifies summer as the son of Svásuðr.
- 52 The second half of this stanza is missing in both R and A; later, paper manuscripts complete it with the words *ár of bæði þau skulu ey fara / unz rjúfask regin* 'Years shall always journey from both, until the powers are ripped apart.' Cf. *SnEGylf* (19, p. 21).
- 53 Gods, here perhaps specifically the group led by Óðinn.
- 54 Giants.
- 55 The names are of giants, possibly 'Barley (or Rock) Sheaf/Roarer', 'Powerfully Thriving Sheaf/Roarer' and 'Ear (of Corn) Sheaf/Roarer'; see note to *Vm.* 35. *SnEGylf* (5, p. 10) says *Aurgelmir* is the frost-giants' name for Ymir.
- 56 Translated on the model of *Vm.* 20 and 42, at the end of which Vafþrúðnir is addressed as a wise giant. Alternatively, translate 'where Augelmir, the wise [or 'fertile'] giant, first came from with the sons of giants'. The second half of this stanza is quoted in *SnEGylf* (5, p. 10).
- 57 '(Snow/Hail-)Storm Waves/Seas/Bays', a collective name for various primaeval rivers in *SnEGylf* (5, pp. 9–10); cf. *Grm.* 26–29, *Hym.* 5.
- 58 The giant is presumably Augelmir.
- 59 The second half of this stanza is lacking in both R and A; it is supplied from manuscripts of *SnEGylf* (5, p. 10), which also quotes a form of the first half. Note also the variant in *SnEUpp* (8, p. 16).
- 60 Or 'foot upon foot'.
- 61 Or 'fruitful'.
- 62 R. D. Fulk, 'An Eddic Analogue to the Scyld Scefing Story', *Review of English Studies* 40 (1989), 313–22 at 318 explains this stanza in light of the growth of barley: 'The "six-headed son" may be identified as an allusion to the spike, which has six rows of kernels in the commonest type of barley, grown in Scandinavia since the Farming Stone Age, and apparently the only type grown there until the Renaissance. Thus the plant is apparently envisaged with its head in the ground, the leaves likened to arms and legs, with the six-headed son growing between the legs. Barley does in fact produce precisely four leaves before tillering. The boy and girl in the giant's armpit can only be the third and fourth leaves,

i.e. the legs themselves. This explains why a point is made of their sexual differentiation, as well as why just one armpit is mentioned.' See note to *Vm.* 35. Cf. *SnEGylf* (5, pp. 10–11).

63 Cf. *Vsp.* 1.

64 Or 'fertile'.

65 ON *lúðr* 'mill-frame' denotes more precisely 'a box or wooden trough, perhaps on legs, in which the stones of a hand-mill sit' (Fulk, 'Eddic Analogue', 316), or, by extension, an entire box-mill. Hence, the giant Bergelmir was presumably ground up, apparently as part of a creation myth comparable to that of Ymir's dismemberment in *Vm.* 21 (cf. the implicit reference to a cosmic mill in *Vm.* 23). The name *Bergelmir* may well suit this interpretation. At first sight, *Ber-* invites interpretation as 'bear', 'bare' or 'berry', but the association with milling and the enigmatic *Vm.* 33 point to the sense 'barley', from Germanic **bariz-* (although another word, *berg* 'rock', may also spring to mind). The second element, *gelmir*, may corroborate this by meaning 'handful or bundle of reaped corn' (cf. OE *gilm/gelm*) or simply 'sheaf'. Bergelmir would then mean 'Barley Sheaf'; his father, *Þrúðgelmir*, would be 'Powerfully Thriving Sheaf' (cf. ON *þróa* 'to thrive'); and his grandfather, Aurgelmir, would be 'Ear (of Corn) Sheaf', if *Aur-* is cognate with OE *ear* 'ear of corn' and is not ON *aurr* 'mud, clay', a word used to denote fertile mud in *Vsp.* 19 and perhaps found in the giant-names *Aurboða*, *Aurgrímnir*, *Aurnir* and *Aurrekr*. Against this interpretation of *gelmir* is its presence in two names associated not with corn or agriculture but with rivers: *Hvergelmir* in *Grm.* 26 and *Vaðgelmir* in *Rm.* 4, in which it seems to mean 'roarer' (cf. ON *gjalla* 'to yell' and the river *Gjöll*). This sense would suit *Vm.*'s giants, since Aurgelmir sprang from stormy rivers in *Vm.* 31, and several other giants have names indicating noisiness. If so, *Bergelmir* would be 'Barley Roarer', *Þrúðgelmir* 'Powerfully Thriving Roarer', and *Aurgelmir* 'Ear (of Corn) Roarer'. It would not be surprising if the original sense of these names were lost on a thirteenth-century audience; if they interpreted them at all, they may well have discerned 'Rock Roarer', 'Powerful Roarer' and 'Mud Roarer', since giants were loud and mighty creatures who lived in mountains and the earth. Additionally, word-play may be entertained. *SnEGylf* (7, p. 11) quotes this stanza but gives it a different context and interpretation (see also *SnEUpp* 10, p. 18). According to this account, Ymir was slain by the sons of Borr, and the blood from his wounds drowned the frost-giants—all except Bergelmir and his household, from which the families of frost-giants descend. Bergelmir saved himself from drowning by going up on to his *lúðr*. Here Snorri seems to interpret *lúðr* as a sea-going vessel—an 'ark' even, as his account appears influenced by Christian traditions of Noah's Ark and apocryphal ideas about the survival of giants after the Flood. However, Snorri's placing of the *lúðr* in an aquatic context may also reflect native tradition, since the magical mill Grotti ended up in the sea in *SnESkáld* (I, 43, p. 52); a stanza in *SnESkáld* (I, 25, p. 38) calls the sea an *eylúðr* 'island-box-mill'; and *lúðr* most probably denotes a whirlpool in *Gg.* 11 and *Fj.* 30.

66 *SnEGylf* (18, p. 20) adds that *Hræsvelgr* 'Corpse Swallower' sits á *nordanverðum himins enda* 'at the northern end of the sky'. Cf. Hymir's abode in *Hym.* 5.

67 This stanza is paraphrased and quoted in *SnEGylf* (18, p. 20), *SnEUpp* (25, p. 60). The name *Hræsvelgr* elsewhere appears only in versified lists of the names of giants and eagles (*SPSMA III*, 709, 950).

68 One of the Vanir gods. He is the father of Freyr and Freyja. *SnEGylf* (23, p. 23) says he rules the wind's movement.

- 69 This line lacks alliteration and may therefore be corrupt. One way to supply it would be to emend to *hvaðan Njörðr um kom með niðjum Ása* ‘whence Njörðr came among the kinsmen of the Æsir’.
- 70 This line may have been interpolated. The next is also suspect.
- 71 ‘Home of the Vanir’. The idea that Njörðr was created by ‘wise powers’ is otherwise unknown.
- 72 According to chapter 4 of *Ynglinga saga* and *SnEGylf* (23, p. 23), the Vanir gave Njörðr to the Æsir as a pledge of faith in settlement of their war; in exchange, the Æsir gave Hœnir to the Vanir. Cf. *Vsp.* 24, *SnEskáld* (I, G57, p. 3).
- 73 This idea is found only here, but compare the post-Ragnarok world of *Vsp.* 58–64, in which innocent gods—including Hœnir, Njörðr’s hostage counterpart—return to live happily.
- 74 Or ‘home meadows’, ‘abodes’, ‘courtyards’.
- 75 This stanza appears fragmentary. Late, paper manuscripts have the following stanza: *Segðu þat it ellipta, allz þú tíva rök / qll, Vafþrúðnir, vitir: / hvat einherjar vinna Herjaförs at, / unz rjúfask regin* ‘Say this as the eleventh thing, Vafþrúðnir, since you may know all the fates of the gods: what work the unique champions of Herjaföðr [‘Father of Hosts’, i.e., Óðinn] do until the powers are ripped apart’.
- 76 This may mean that they kill each other, before being resurrected. Elsewhere in Norse myth, valkyries choose the slain by taking fallen warriors, whom Óðinn has selected, to his hall to join the unique champions.
- 77 This stanza is quoted in *SnEGylf* (41, p. 34), *SnEUpp* (25, p. 58). The *einherjar* ‘unique/only champions’ are fallen male warriors who, having been chosen by Óðinn, are (elsewhere at least) brought to his hall by valkyries, so they may fight beside him at Ragnarok.
- 78 Or ‘why you’.
- 79 Here *rúnar* apparently means ‘secrets’ or ‘mysteries’, rather than ‘runes’.
- 80 Literally, ‘you say the most truthful (thing)’.
- 81 ‘Dark/Mist Hel’. Cf. *Vsp.* 2.
- 82 An obscure line. Perhaps *Hel* (or *hel*) here denotes not the underworld land of the dead or its presiding lady, but ‘death’. Cf. *SnEGylf* (3, p. 9), according to which Niflhel is the ninth world, to which wicked people are condemned to descend.
- 83 ‘Mighty Winter’, the terrible winter that precedes Ragnarok.
- 84 Cf. *Vsp.* 40, 44, *SnEGylf* (51, p. 49).
- 85 ‘Life’ and ‘Life Impetuousness(?)’, characters unknown outside this stanza (but cf. *Fj.* 38); for variants see the textual apparatus. The neut. pronoun *þau* suggests that one is fem. and one masc.
- 86 With *Hoddmímir* ‘Hoard Mímir’ and his wood, compare *Mimameiðr* (or *Mímameiðr*) ‘Mimi’s/Mími’s Tree’, a likely manifestation of the world-tree, in *Fj.*
- 87 Cf. *Vm.* 14, *Vsp.* 19 and the Biblical manna.
- 88 It seems likely that Líf and Lífþrasir will survive Ragnarok and repopulate the world. A version of this stanza is quoted in *SnEGylf* (53, p. 54); the variant in *SnEUpp* (31, p. 84) says *leynast meyjar í Mímis holdi* ‘maidens hide themselves in Mímir’s flesh’, *morgin döggrva* ‘bedew the morning’ and *þar um aldr alast* ‘will be nourished there forever’.
- 89 The sun is apparently again personified, as in *Vm.* 22–23.

- 90 Or ‘overtaken this one [i.e., this sun]’, implicitly in a solar eclipse. Variants of the wolf Fenrir’s swallowing of the sun survive in *Vsp.* 39–40 (probably), *Grm.* 39 and *SnEGylf* (12, p. 14), and on the tenth-century Gosforth Cross from Cumbria, England. Additionally, a fragment of a Viking Age stone cross from Ovingham, Northumbria, England might show a wolf being restrained from swallowing the sun.
- 91 ‘Elf Disc’, a name for the sun; cf. *FSk.* 4.
- 92 This stanza is quoted in *SnEGylf* (53, p. 54); *SnEUpp* (31, p. 84) has a metrically deficient second half, *sú mun renna eða riða, / regimbrautir mær* ‘that maiden will run or ride divine/mighty-ways’. The daughter is unnamed.
- 93 An obscure reference, perhaps to personified waves. Alternatively, compare the *marlídendr* ‘sea-travelling spirits’ mentioned in chapter 16 of *Eyrbyggja saga*; also perhaps *BDr.* 12.
- 94 Or ‘Three of the host (*þjóðar*) of maidens fall over (= come upon?) the village(s)/fields of Mǫgþrasir’. Alternatively, again, ‘Three of the maidens of Mǫgþrasir come upon the village(s) of people (*þjóðar*)’. *Mögþrasir* ‘Persistent Son(?)’ is otherwise unknown (is he a child of st. 45’s *Lifþrasir?*), but perhaps his ‘village’ is the new, re-inhabited world. The whole stanza is obscure.
- 95 Or ‘only guardian-spirits are in their world’. Either way, the sense is obscure.
- 96 I.e., the ‘three’ females. Perhaps compare *Vsp.* 8.
- 97 Or ‘gods’.
- 98 An apocalyptic fire, probably of Christian origin, but presumably associated at some stage with the Norse fire-giant Surtr; cf. *Vsp.* 51–52, 55 and *SnEGylf* (4, p. 9; 51, pp. 50–53). Alternatively, instead of *surtalogi*, read *Surta logi* or *Surtalogi* ‘Surti’s flame’, **Surti* being a grammatically weak form of *Surtr*. *SnEUpp* (16, p. 34; 31, p. 84) has *svartalogi* ‘black flame’.
- 99 Instead of *sloknar* ‘goes out, dies’, manuscripts of *SnEGylf* have *sortnar* ‘turns black’.
- 100 Móði ‘Angry One’ (*Megi* in one manuscript of *SnEGylf*) and Magni ‘Strong One’ are Þórr’s sons.
- 101 ‘Miller/Crusher’, Þórr’s hammer.
- 102 The idea may be that Móði and Magni will use the hammer’s rejuvenative power to help create a new world after Ragnarok. Alternatively, translate ‘Móði and Magni will have Mjöllnir and fight [their enemies] at the end of the war’, thereby bringing Ragnarok to a close. But *Vingnis*, the reading of A and manuscripts of *SnEGylf*, is probably superior to R’s *ok vinna* ‘and work/fight’; it yields the sense ‘Móði and Magni will have Vingnir’s Mjöllnir at the war’s end’, *Vingnir*, which may mean ‘Swinger’, being a name of Þórr (on this name, see also note to *Vm.* 53). *SnEGylf* (53, p. 54) quotes this stanza; *SnEUpp* (31, p. 84) has a different, probably corrupt final line, *Vignigs synir at vígroði* ‘Vignig’s(?) sons in the battle-redness’.
- 103 Óðinn. Fenrir’s devouring of Óðinn is also described in *Ls.* 58 and *SnEGylf* (51, pp. 50–52), and it lies behind *Vsp.* 52–53. Additionally, it is depicted on a fragment of a tenth-century cross from Kirk Andreas, Isle of Man; arguably on the Ledberg Stone from Östergötland, Sweden; also possibly on the west face of the Gosforth Cross and on the Skipwith Stone from North Yorkshire, England.
- 104 For this line to alliterate, an East Norse or pre-literary West Norse form of the verb *reka* is required, namely **vreka*, to which the word is emended in this edition; cf. *Háv.* 32.
- 105 Cf. *Vsp.* R 53, H 47, *SnEGylf* (51, pp. 50–52); it is presumably Víðarr, Óðinn’s son, who is shown stretching the jaws of a wolf-headed serpent on the east side of the Gosforth Cross.

A's reading, *vitnis* 'of the wolf', which is adopted here, appears superior to R's *vingnis* 'of Vingnir'. The name *Vingnir* is attested as the name of a giant, of Þórr and of Óðinn; here it probably results from textual corruption (see note to *Vm.* 51).

- 106 I.e., Baldr's pyre, perhaps to light it; in Icelandic tradition, Baldr was shot dead by his blind brother Hœðr at Loki's instigation; see *Vsp.* 31–33, *BDr.* and *SnEGylf* (49, pp. 45–46). Óðinn asks essentially the same unfair question in chapter 9 of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*.
- 107 I.e., Baldr's ear.
- 108 Note that, in *Vm.*, a very long time has passed since Baldr's funeral, and that his death is therefore temporally distanced from Ragnarok.
- 109 The giant's '(rune)-staves' are words of wisdom (cf. *Alv.* 35).
- 110 Literally, '(male) beings'.

Grímnismál

Grímnismál (*Grm.*) ‘The Sayings of Grímnir’ survives complete in both **R** (fol. 8v–11r) and **A** (fol. 3v–5v). In **A** it follows *Vm.* and precedes *Hym.* The poem’s date and place of composition are, as usual, uncertain, but it may well have oral roots in the pagan period. Its metre is mainly *ljóðaháttir*, but there are several instances of *galdralag* and some passages resemble *fornyrðislag*.

Grm. has broad structural similarities to the preceding poem in both **R** and **A**, *Vm.* Both are essentially wisdom-poems in which Óðinn, having disagreed with his wife, visits a foreign court. There he conceals his identity and undergoes a test, during which information is imparted about the world—its creation, natural phenomena, inhabitants and destruction. At the end, Óðinn reveals his true identity to his drunken, duped opponent, who loses his life in an extreme realization of the dangers of inebriation (cf. *Háv.* 13–14).

The locations differ, however. *Vm.* is largely set in the land of giants. *Grm.*, like *Rþ.*, is mainly set in the world of humans, albeit ones who, in the case of Geirrøðr and Hrauðungr, share their names with giants. The poems’ focus differs accordingly. In *Vm.* Óðinn seems keen to hear about Ragnarok, perhaps with a view to averting his dreadful fate. In *Grm.* all he seeks to discover is the hospitality of his foster-son, Geirrøðr, and, apparently, Geirrøðr’s fitness to rule. Having been refreshed by Geirrøðr’s son, Agnarr, Óðinn names him as the next king. He then reveals—through monologue, rather than question-and-answer dialogue—a wealth of information, perhaps stitched together by the poet from various sources, full of pointed references to divine rule, eating, drinking, hospitality, suffering, reconciliation, filial vengeance, water, protection from heat, loss of thought and memory, and the alliance of *einherjar* ‘unique champions’ and gods at Ragnarok.

Some scholars have claimed (and others denied) that this revelation is, or was in an earlier setting, ‘shamanistic’. That is to say, Óðinn’s torture between two fires in *Grm.* might have a basis in a ritual designed to raise the sufferer’s consciousness into communion with otherworldly spirits who would grant him privileged knowledge—an ordeal comparable, perhaps, to Óðinn’s hanging on a tree to discover secrets in *Háv.* 138–39. Óðinn’s ordeal in *Grm.* has been likened more specifically to Indian ascetic practice (*tapas*), and especially to a Díksá ritual that ‘precedes the *soma*-sacrifice, during which the initiate—dressed in an antelope-cloak—is placed near the sacrificial fire, and through endurance to the heat obtains a very high degree of spiritual

strength'.¹ But much depends on the meaning of stt. 42 and 45, which is somewhat unclear. What we can say is that, although it appears that 'the motif of "wisdom from ordeal" is a well-attested motif throughout Northern medieval literature as well as an established Indo-European theme',² taking *Grm.* as it stands in the manuscripts, the prose framework's explanation of the fires as a mere torture demands no apology, especially as it has many parallels.

In any event, the information Grímnir (Óðinn) imparts serves several purposes. First, it gives Geirrøðr every chance to recognize his god, rescue him, and honour him with food and drink. Secondly, it gives Agnarr the knowledge he will need to rule well, perhaps some of the same advice which the 'old man' (Óðinn) earlier gave to the young Geirrøðr (in A). Thirdly, it represents a grim reminder to people of the consequences of not honouring their god. As one scholar observes, the poem stresses the 'importance of correctly aligning, [and] then steadily maintaining, relations between the human and the divine'.³ Finally, Grímnir's words may torture Geirrøðr with the knowledge of a glorious afterlife with the *einherjar*, which he is to miss.

How *Grm.* was read or performed is unknown. Possibly it, like *Vm.* and other Eddic dialogue-poems in *ljóðaháttir*, was once a dramatic monologue. Perhaps a masked, cloaked actor played the part of Grímnir, tethered between two burning cauldrons in a hall. Before him may have stood two other actors as the horn-bearing Agnarr and the drunken, sword-bearing Geirrøðr. Perhaps, if *Grm.* has roots in genuine pagan ritual, they lie in initiation rites. One scholar remarks:

One can imagine the scene in the viking hall, with the fireplace down the middle of the high rafted room, the priest who represents the highest god torturing himself by heat and fasting until he is in an ecstatic condition that enables him to recite the strange names of Odin and tell the men in the hall what they should know. One may actually suppose that there was no other way in which the average warrior at the king's court could learn these stories and know about the gods he worshiped. The poem is like the scenario of a well-acted play, a monologue involving the disguised god, the discomfited king, and his kindly son.⁴

Grm. is a major source for Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, which cites twenty-two of its stanzas in whole or part, and draws on at least six more.

1 See J. P. Schjødt, 'The "Fire Ordeal" in the *Grímnismál*: Initiation or Annihilation?', *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 12 (1988), 29–43 at 31; Schjødt, however, opposes this view.

2 S. L. Higley, *Between Languages: The Uncooperative Text in Early Welsh and Old English Nature Poetry* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), p. 237.

3 C. Larrington, 'Vafþrúðnismál and Grímnismál: Cosmic History, Cosmic Geography', in P. Acker and C. Larrington, ed., *The Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Mythology* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 59–77 at 74.

4 E. Haugen, 'The *Edda* as Ritual: Odin and His Masks', in R. J. Glendinning and Haraldur Bessason, ed., *Edda: A Collection of Essays* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1983), pp. 3–24 at 12.

Synopsis

Prose: A prologue describes how Óðinn and his wife, Frigg, disguise themselves as an old couple and each foster one of the young sons of King Hrauðungr. Óðinn fosters the elder, Geirrøðr; Frigg fosters the younger, Agnarr. Óðinn helps Geirrøðr maliciously exile Agnarr and become king of their late father's realm.

The scene shifts to Hliðskjálf, Óðinn's observation platform. Óðinn taunts Frigg that her foster-son is mating with a giantess in a cave, whereas Geirrøðr is ruling over a kingdom. Frigg retorts that Geirrøðr is so stingy that he tortures his guests if too many arrive. Óðinn is outraged by this accusation and has a bet with his wife about it.

Presumably without her husband's knowledge, Frigg sees to it that Geirrøðr is on the lookout for a dangerous sorcerer. Unknown to Geirrøðr, that sorcerer is Óðinn in disguise. Geirrøðr seizes Óðinn and tortures him between two fires because he will give no information except his (supposed) name, *Grímnir* 'Masked One'.

Geirrøðr's son, Agnarr, is shocked by his father's actions, and gives *Grímnir* a drinking horn. *Grímnir* drains it and, as the fire starts to burn his cloak, finally speaks.

Verse: *Grímnir* tells the fire to get away from him (1). He says that, during the eight nights in which he has sat between the fires, only Agnarr has offered him refreshment. He will reward Agnarr with sole rulership of the land (2–3).

Grímnir lists twelve divine dwelling-places and the gods associated with them. Þórr lives in Þrúðheimr (4), Ullr in lands called Ýdalir (5), another god (unnamed) in Valaskjálf (6), and Óðinn and Sága drink in Sókkvabekkr (7). Óðinn selects the slain daily in Valhöll—a hall, situated on Glaðsheimr, whose martial trappings make it unmistakable (8–10). Prymheimr was once home to the giant Þjazi, but now belongs to his daughter, Skaði (11). Baldr lives in lands called Breiðablik (12), and Heimdallr drinks mead in Himinbjörg (13). Freyja selects half the slain each day at Fólkvangr and decides where they sit; Óðinn has the other half (14). Forseti calms disputes in the golden-pillared hall called Glitnir (15). Njörðr has halls in Nóatún (16). Víðarr's land (unnamed) is overgrown, but it is there that he states that he will avenge Óðinn's death (17).

Few people know that the *einherjar*—the (formerly slain) 'unique warriors' whom Óðinn chose to fight beside the gods at Ragnarok—eat the boar Sæhrímnir, which the cook Andhrímnir boils in the pot Eldhrímnir (18). Óðinn feeds his wolves, Geri and Freki, but he himself lives on wine alone (19). His ravens Huginn and Muninn fly over the earth each day, but he fears they may not return (20).

After an obscure verse about the bridge between heaven and earth (21), *Grímnir* refers to the gate Valgrind (22), and to the largest hall, Bilskírnir, which belongs to his son (Þórr) (23). His thoughts then return to Valhöll and the fight of the massed *einherjar* against the wolf (Fenrir) at Ragnarok (24).

A goat called Heiðrún stands on Valhöll's roof, bites a tree called Læraðr, and has to fill a vat with a stream of mead that will not run dry (25). The stag Eikþyrnir also

stands on it and bites its branches. Drops fall from its antlers into Hvergelmir, from where all rivers have their source (26).

Grímnir lists the rivers, ending with the two Kerlaugar, which Þórr has to wade when he goes to give judgement at Yggdrasill because the celestial bridge is ablaze (27–29). He also names the horses ridden by the gods on their way to give judgement (30).

Next Grímnir describes aspects of the world-tree, Yggdrasill. It has three roots. The underworld goddess Hel lives beneath one, frost-giants under another, and humans below the third (31). The squirrel Ratatoskr brings word from the eagle at the top of the tree to the dragon Niðhoggr below (32). Four stags gnaw the tree's shoots (33), and snakes lie beneath it, eating away (34). The tree suffers as a stag bites it from above and Niðhoggr from below, and its side rots (35).

Grímnir asks some valkyries to bring him a drinking-horn (36). He then speaks of the sun, the moon and the terrestrial world. Two horses, Árvakr and Alsviðr, drag the sun up each day (37). A shield called Svpł stands before it, to prevent earth and sea from burning away (38). The wolf Sköll pursues the sun, while the wolf Hati lies in wait before it (39).

Earth was made from the flesh, sea from the blood, rocks from the bones, trees from the hair, and the sky from the skull of the giant Ymir (40). Miðgarðr was formed from his eyelashes (41), and the clouds from his brain (41).

After a somewhat mysterious stanza in which Grímnir appears to promise the gods' favour to whoever removes(?) the fire (42), he lists nine of the best things that exist: Skiðblaðnir (ship), Yggdrasill (tree), Óðinn (Áss/god), Sleipnir (steed), Bilröst (bridge), Bragi (poet), Hábrók (hawk), Garmr (hound) and Brimir (sword) (43–44).

In another rather obscure stanza, Grímnir speaks of welcome relief and of the gods at Ægir's feast (45). He then lists many of his names and describes his slaying of an obscure character, 'the eminent son of Miðviðnir' (46–50).

At last, Grímnir addresses Geirrøðr directly. Geirrøðr is drunk, he says, and has lost Óðinn's favour (51). He remembers little that he has been told, and will die by his own sword (52). His fate is sealed as Óðinn reveals himself and challenges Geirrøðr to approach him (53–54).

Prose: Geirrøðr slips and impales himself on his sword as he moves to take Óðinn from the fires. Óðinn disappears, and Agnarr rules the kingdom for a long time.

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Frá sonum Hrauðungs konungs

Hrauðungr konungr átti tvá sonu. Hét annarr Agnarr, en annarr Geirrøðr. Agnarr var tíu vetra, en Geirrøðr átta vetra. Þeir reru tveir á báti með dorgar sínar at smáfiski. Vindr rak þá í haf út. Í náttmyrkri brutu þeir við land, ok gengu upp, fundu kotbónða einn. Par váru þeir um vetrinn. Kerling fóstraði Agnar, en karl Geirrøðr.

At vári fekk karl þeim skip. En er *pau kerling* leiddu þá til strandar, þá mælti karl einmæli við Geirrøðr. Þeir fengu byr ok kvómu til stöðva fóðurs síns. Geirrøðr var fram í skipi. Hann hljóp upp á land, en hratt út skipinu ok mælti: 'Farðu þar er smyl hafi þik!' Skipit rak út, en Geirrøðr gekk upp til bœjar. Honum var vel fagnat. Þá var faðir hans andaðr. Var þá Geirrøðr til konungs tekinn ok varð maðr ágætr.

Óðinn ok Frigg sátu í Hliðskjálfa ok sá um heima alla. Óðinn mælti: 'Sér þú Agnar, fóstra þinn, hvar hann elr börn við gýgi í hellinum? En Geirrøðr, fóstri minn, er konungr ok sitr nú at landi!' Frigg segir: 'Hann er matníðingr sá at hann kvelr gesti sína ef honum þíkkja ofmargir koma!' Óðinn segir at þat er in mesta lygi. Þau veðja um þetta mál.

Frigg sendi eskismey sína, Fullu, til Geirrøðar. Hon bað konung varask, at eigi fyrgerði honum fjölkunnigr maðr, sá er þar var kominn í land. Ok sagði þat mark á, at engi hundr var svá ólmr at á hann myndi hlaupa. En þat var inn mesti hégómi at Geirrøðr væri eigi matgóðr. Ok þó lætr hann handtaka þann mann er eigi vildu hundar á ráða. Sá var í feldi blám ok nefndisk Grímnir, ok sagði ekki fleira frá sér, þótt hann væri at spurðr. Konungr lét hann pína til sagna ok setja milli elda tveggja, ok sat hann þar átta nætr.

Geirrøðr konungr átti son, tíu vetra gamlan, ok hét Agnarr eptir bróður hans. Agnarr gekk at Grímní ok gaf honum horn fullt at drekka. Sagði at konungr gørði illa, er hann lét pína hann saklausán. Grímnir drakk af. Þá var eldrinn svá kominn at feldrinn brann af Grímní. Hann kvað:

About the Sons of King Hrauðungr

King Hrauðungr had two sons.¹ One was called Agnarr and the other Geirrøðr. Agnarr was ten years old, and Geirrøðr eight years old. The two of them rowed in a boat with their fishing-lines to catch small fish. A wind drove them out to sea. In the darkness of night they were wrecked against land, and they went ashore [and] found a smallholder. They stayed there for the winter. The old woman fostered Agnarr, and the old man fostered Geirrøðr.²

In the spring the old man got them a ship. And when he and the old woman led them to the shore, then the old man spoke in private to Geirrøðr. They got a fair wind and came to their father's landing place. Geirrøðr was at the bow of the ship. He leapt ashore, and pushed the ship out and said: 'Go where the fiends may have you!'³ The ship rode out,⁴ and Geirrøðr went up to the settlement. He was warmly welcomed. By then his father was dead. Geirrøðr was then chosen as king and became a renowned man.

Óðinn and Frigg sat in Hliðskjálf and looked through all worlds.⁵ Óðinn said: 'Do you see Agnarr, your foster-son, where he begets children on a giantess in the cave? But Geirrøðr, my foster-son, is a king and now rules over a land!'⁶ Frigg says: 'He's so stingy with food that he tortures his guests if it seems to him too many come!' Óðinn says that is the greatest lie. They had a bet on this matter.

Frigg sent her box-maiden, Fulla,⁷ to Geirrøðr. She told the king to beware lest a magic-knowing man,⁸ the one who had come to that land, should cast a spell on him. And she said the mark [of this man] was that no dog was so fierce that it would jump on him. But it was the greatest slander that Geirrøðr was not generous with food. And, even so, he had that man seized whom dogs would not attack. That one was in a dark-blue cloak and called himself Grímnir,⁹ and he said nothing more about himself, even though he was asked. The king had him tortured to make him talk and set between two fires, and he sat there for eight nights.¹⁰

King Geirrøðr had a son, ten years old, and he was called Agnarr after his brother. Agnarr went to Grímnir and gave him a full horn to drink from. He said the king was acting disgracefully when he had him, an innocent man, tortured. Grímnir drained it. By then the fire had progressed so that the cloak was burning off Grímnir. He said:

Grímnismál

1. 'Heitr ertu, hripuðr, ok heldr til mikill,
gøngumk firr, funi!
Loði sviðnar, þótt ek á lopt berak,
brennumk feldr fyrir.
2. 'Átta nætr sat ek milli elda hér,
svá at mér mangi mat né bauð,
nema einn Agnarr, er einn skal ráða,
Geirrøðar sonr, Gotna landi.
3. 'Heill skaltu, Agnarr, allz þik heilan biðr
Veratýr vera;
eins drykkjar þú skalt aldregi
betri gjöld geta!
4. 'Land er heilagt er ek liggja sé
Ásum ok álfum nær;
en í Þruðheimi skal Þórr vera,
unz um rjúfask regin.
5. 'Ýdalir heita, þar er Ullr hefir
sér um górvra sali;
Álfheim Frey gáfu í árdaga
tívar at tannfé.
6. 'Bær er sá inn þriði, er blíð regin
silfri þykðu sali;
Válagskjálf heitir, er vélti sér
Áss í árdaga.
7. 'Søkkvabekkr heitir inn fjórði, en þar svalar knegu
unnir yfir glymja;
þar þau Óðinn ok Sága drekka um alla daga,
glöð, ór gullnum kerum.
8. 'Glaðsheimr heitir inn fimmti, þars in gullbjarta
Valhöll víð of þrumir;
en þar Hroptr kýss hverjan dag
vápndauða vera.
9. 'Mjök er auðkent þeim er til Óðins koma,
salkynni at sjá;
skoptum er rann rept, skjoldum er salr þakiðr,
brynjum um bekki strát.

The Sayings of Grímnir

1. 'You're hot, hastener,¹¹ and rather too huge;
go further from me, flame!
The loden coat is getting singed, though I bear it aloft,
the cloak burns before me.
2. 'For eight nights I sat here amid fires,
without anyone having offered me food,
except Agnarr alone, who alone shall rule —
Geirrøðr's son — the land of the Gotar.¹²
3. 'You shall be hale,¹³ Agnarr, since Veratýr¹⁴
bids you be hale;
for one drink you shall never
receive a better reward!
4. 'The land is holy which I see lying
near to Æsir and elves;
and Pórr shall be in Prúðheimr,¹⁵
until the powers are ripped apart.¹⁶
5. 'Ýdalir¹⁷ it's called,¹⁸ where Ullr¹⁹ has
built halls for himself;
in early days the gods gave Álfheimr²⁰
to Freyr as a tooth-fee.²¹
6. 'The third²² homestead is the one where kindly powers
thatched halls with silver;
Válaskjálf²³ it's called, which an Áss²⁴ built
ably for himself in early days.²⁵
7. 'Sókkvabekkr²⁶ is the name of the fourth, and there cool waves
plash over it;
there Óðinn and Sága²⁷ drink through all days,
glad, from golden goblets.
8. 'Glaðsheimr²⁸ is the name of the fifth, where the gold-bright
Valhöll²⁹ stands broadly;
and there, each day, Hroprtr³⁰ chooses
men killed by weapons.³¹
9. 'Much is easily recognized³² by those who come to Óðinn's,³³
to see his household:
the house is raftered with shafts,³⁴ the hall is thatched with shields,
the benches [are] bestrewn with mail-coats.³⁵

10. 'Mjók er auðkent þeim er til Óðins koma,
salkynni at sjá;
vargr hangir fyr vestan dyrr,
ok drúpir örн yfir.
11. 'Prymheimr heitir inn sétti, er þjazi bjó,
sá inn ámátki jötunn;
en nú Skaði byggvir, skír brúðr goða,
fornar tóptir fóður.
12. 'Breiðablik eru in sjúndu, en þar Baldr hefir
sér um gerva sali,
á því landi er ek liggja veit
faesta feiknustafi.
13. 'Himinbjörg eru in áttu, en þar Heimdall
kveða valda véum;
þar vorðr goða drekkr í væru ranni,
glaðr, inn góða mjøð.
14. 'Fólkvangr er inn níundi, en þar Freyja ræðr
sessa kostum í sal;
hálfan val hon kýss hverjan dag,
en hálfan Óðinn á.
15. 'Glitnir er inn tíundi, hann er gulli studdr
ok silfri þakðr it sama;
en þar Forseti byggir flestan dag
ok svæfir allar sakir.
16. 'Nóatún eru in elliptu, en þar Njörðr hefir
sér um górvra sali;
manna þengill, inn meinsvani
hátimbruðum hørgi ræðr.
17. 'Hrísi vex ok há grasi
Viðars land, viði;
en þar mógr of læzk af mars baki,
frœkn, at hefna fóður.
18. 'Andhrímnir laetr í Eldhrínni
Sæhrímnri soðinn;
fleska bezt, en þat fáir vitu
við hvat einherjar alask.

10. 'Much is easily recognized by those who come to Óðinn's,
to see his household;
a wolf³⁶ hangs west of the door
and an eagle stoops above.
11. 'Prymheimr³⁷ is the name of the sixth, where Þjazi lived,
that almighty giant,³⁸
but now Skaði, the gods' shining bride,³⁹ inhabits
the ancient sites of her father.⁴⁰
12. 'Breiðablik⁴¹ is the seventh, and there Baldr
has built halls for himself,
on the land where I know fewest
fell staves⁴² lie.⁴³
13. 'Himinbjörg⁴⁴ is the eighth, and there Heimdallr,
they say, presides over sanctuaries;
there the gods' watchman⁴⁵ drinks in a homely hall,
glad, the good mead.⁴⁶
14. 'Fólkvangr⁴⁷ is the ninth, and there Freyja decides
the choice of seats in the hall;⁴⁸
half the slain she selects each day,
and Óðinn has [the other] half.⁴⁹
15. 'Glitnir⁵⁰ is the tenth, it's supported by golden pillars
and similarly thatched with silver;
and there Forseti⁵¹ dwells most days
and soothes all disputes.⁵²
16. 'Nóatún⁵³ is the eleventh, and there Njörðr has
built halls for himself;
a lord of men, the blameless one
rules a high-built altar.⁵⁴
17. 'Overgrown with brushwood and tall grass⁵⁵
is Víðarr's land, with a wood;⁵⁶
and there the brave youth asserts from his steed's back
that he will avenge his father.⁵⁷
18. 'Andhrímnir has Sæhrímnir
boiled in Eldhrímnir;⁵⁸
[it's] the best of flesh, but few know
on what the unique champions live.⁵⁹

19. 'Gera ok Freka seðr gunntamiðr
hróðigr Herjafqðr;
en við vín eitt vápngofugr
Óðinn æ lifir.
20. 'Huginn ok Muninn fljúga hverjan dag
jörmungrund yfir;
óumk ek of Hugin, at hann aprt né komit,
þó sjámk meirr um Munin.
21. 'Pýtr Þund, unir Þjóðvitnis
fiskr flóði í;
árstraumr *bikkir* ofmikill
valglaumi at vaða.
22. 'Valgrind heitir, er stendr velli á,
heilög, fyr helgum durum;
forn er sú grind, en þat fáir vitu,
hvé hon er í lás lokin.
- 23 [24]. 'Fimm hundruð gólfra ok um fjórum tögum,
svá hygg ek Bilskírni með bugum;
ranna þeira er ek rept vita,
míns veit ek mest magar.
- 24 [23]. 'Fimm hundruð dura ok um fjórum tögum,
svá hygg ek á Valhöllu vera;
áttu hundruð einherja ganga ór einum durum,
þá er þeir fara at vitni at vega.
25. 'Heiðrún heitir geit er stendr höllu á Herjafqðrs
ok bítr af Læraðs limum;
skapker fylla hon skal ins skíra mjaðar,
knáat sú veig vanask.
26. 'Eikþyrnir heitir hjørtr er stendr á höllu Herjafqðrs
ok bítr af Læraðs limum;
en af hans hornum drýpr í Hvergelmi,
þaðan eigu vøtn qll vega.

19. 'Battle-trained, glorious Herjafǫðr⁶⁰
feeds Geri and Freki,⁶¹
but on wine alone weapon-noble
Óðinn always lives.⁶²
20. 'Huginn and Muninn fly every day
over the vast earth;⁶³
I fear for Huginn, that he won't come back,
yet I'm more concerned about Muninn.⁶⁴
21. 'Pund thunders, Þjóðvitnir's fish
resides contentedly in the flood;⁶⁵
the river-current seems too strong
for the steed of the slain(?) to wade.⁶⁶
22. 'Valgrind it's called, which stands on open ground,
holy, before holy doors;⁶⁷
ancient is that gate, but few know
how it's locked with a latch.
- 23 [24]. 'Five hundred rooms and forty⁶⁸
are in Bilskírnir⁶⁹ altogether, so I think;
of those buildings that I know are roofed,
I know my son's is biggest.⁷⁰
- 24 [23]. 'Five hundred doors and forty⁷¹
are in Valhöll, so I think;
eight hundred⁷² unique champions walk from one door,
when they go to fight the wolf.⁷³
25. 'Heiðrún⁷⁴ is the name of the goat which stands on Herjafǫðr's hall⁷⁵
and bites on Læraðr's limbs;⁷⁶
she must fill a specially-crafted vat⁷⁷ with the shining mead,
that intoxicating drink cannot run out.
26. 'Eikþyrnir⁷⁸ is the name of the hart which stands on Herjafǫðr's hall
and bites on Læraðr's limbs;
and from his horns drops fall into Hvergelmir,⁷⁹
whence all waters take their courses.⁸⁰

27. 'Síð ok Víð, Sœkin ok Eikin,
 Svöl ok Gunnþró,
 Fjorm ok Fimbulþul,
 Rín ok Rennandi,
 Gipul ok Gopul,
 Gomul ok Geirvimul —
 þær hverfa um hodd goða —
 Pyn ok Vín,
 Þöll ok Höll,
 Gráð ok Gunnþorin.
28. 'Vín á heitir enn, önnur Vegsvinn,
 þriðja Þjóðnuma,
 Nyt ok Nöt, Nönn ok Hrønn,
 Slíð ok Hríð, Sylgr ok Ylgr,
 Við ok Ván, Vönd ok Strönd,
 Gjöll ok Leiptr, þær falla gumnum nær,
 en falla til Heljar heðan.
29. 'Kormt ok Qrmt ok Kerlaugar tvær,
 þær skal Þórr vaða,
 hverjan dag, er hann dœma ferr
 at aski Yggdrasils,
 þvíat ásbrú brenn vell loga;
 heilög vótn hlóa.
30. 'Glaðr ok Gyllir, Gler ok Skeiðbrimir,
 Silfrintoppr ok Sinir,
 Gísl ok Falhófnir, Gulltoppr ok Léttfeti —
 þeim ríða Æsir jóm,
 dag hvern, er þeir dœma fara
 at aski Yggdrasils.
31. 'Þrjár rœtr standa á þrjá vega
 undan aski Yggdrasils;
 Hel býr undir einni, annarri hrímþursar,
 þriðju mennskir menn.
32. 'Ratatoskr heitir íkorni er renna skal
 at aski Yggdrasils;
 arnar orð hann skal ofan bera
 ok segja Niðhöggi niðr.
33. 'Hirtir eru ok fjórir, þeirs af hæfingar á
 gaghálsir gnaga:
 Dáinn ok Dvalinn,
 Duneyrr ok Duraþrór.

- 27.⁸¹ 'Síð⁸² and Víð⁸³ Scekin⁸⁴ and Eikin,⁸⁵
Svql⁸⁶ and Gunnþró,⁸⁷
Fjorm⁸⁸ and Fimbulpul,⁸⁹
Rín⁹⁰ and Rennandi,⁹¹
Gipul⁹² and Gópul,⁹³
Gómul⁹⁴ and Geirvimul⁹⁵ —
they flow around the hoards⁹⁶ of the gods —
Pyn⁹⁷ and Vín,⁹⁸
Þoll⁹⁹ and Hóll,¹⁰⁰
Gráð¹⁰¹ and Gunnþorin.¹⁰²
28. 'A river is called Vín,¹⁰³ moreover,¹⁰⁴ a second Vegsvinn,¹⁰⁵
a third Þjóðnuma,¹⁰⁶
Nyt¹⁰⁷ and Nöt,¹⁰⁸ Nönn¹⁰⁹ and Hrønn,¹¹⁰
Slíð¹¹¹ and Hríð,¹¹² Sylgr¹¹³ and Ylgr,¹¹⁴
Víð¹¹⁵ and Ván,¹¹⁶ Vönd¹¹⁷ and Strönd,¹¹⁸
Gjöll¹¹⁹ and Leiptr,¹²⁰ they fall¹²¹ near humans,
and fall from here to Hel.¹²²
29. 'Kormt¹²³ and Qrmt¹²⁴ and two Kerlaugar,¹²⁵
Þórr must wade them,
every day, when he goes to give judgement
at the ash of Yggdrasill,¹²⁶
because all the god-bridge¹²⁷ burns with flame,
holy waters boil(?).¹²⁸
30. 'Glaðr¹²⁹ and Gyllir,¹³⁰ Gler¹³¹ and Skeiðbrimir,¹³²
Silfrintoppr¹³³ and Sinir,¹³⁴
Gísl¹³⁵ and Falhófnir,¹³⁶ Gulltoppr¹³⁷ and Léttfeti¹³⁸ —
the Æsir¹³⁹ ride these steeds,
every day, when they go to give judgement
at the ash of Yggdrasill.¹⁴⁰
31. 'Three roots extend¹⁴¹ in three directions
from under the ash of Yggdrasill;¹⁴²
Hel¹⁴³ lives under one, frost-giants [under] another,
human beings¹⁴⁴ [under] a third.
32. 'Ratatoskr¹⁴⁵ is the name of the squirrel which must run
in the ash of Yggdrasill;
an eagle's¹⁴⁶ words he must bring from above¹⁴⁷
and speak them to Niðhoggr¹⁴⁸ beneath.
33. 'There are also four stags, those which gnaw on its shoots,¹⁴⁹
with necks bent back:
Dáinn¹⁵⁰ and Dvalinn,¹⁵¹
Duneyrr¹⁵² and Duraprór.¹⁵³

34. 'Ormar fleiri liggja undir aski Yggdrasils
 en þat uf hyggi hvern ósviðra apa;
 Góinn ok Móinn — þeir eru Grafvitnis synir —
 Grábakr ok Grafvölluðr;
 Ófnir ok Sváfnir hygg ek at æ skyli
 meiðs kvistu má.
35. 'Askr Yggdrasils drýgir erfiði,
 meira en menn viti;
 hjörtr bítr ofan, en á hliðu fúnar,
 skerðir Niðhoggr neðan.
36. 'Hrist ok Mist vil ek at mér horn beri,
 Skeggjöld ok Skogul,
 Hildi ok Prúði,
 Hlókk ok Herfjötur,
 Göll ok Geirö lul,
 Randgríð ok Ráðgrið ok Reginleif;
 þær bera einherjum ql.
37. 'Árvakr ok Alsviðr, þeir skulu upp heðan,
 svangir, Sól draga;
 en und þeira bógum fálu blíð regin,
 Æsir, ísarn kól.
38. 'Svol heitir, hann stendr Sólu fyrir,
 skjöldr, skínanda goði;
 björg ok brim ek veit at brenna skulu,
 ef hann fellr í frá.
39. 'Sköll heitir úlfr er fylgir inu skírleita goði
 til varna viðar;
 en annarr, Hati, hann er Hróðvitnis sonr,
 sá skal fyr heiða brúði himins.
40. 'Ór Ymis holdi var jørð um sköpuð,
 en ór sveita sær,
 björg ór beinum, baðmr ór hári,
 en ór hausi himinn.
41. 'En ór hans brám gerðu blíð regin
 Miðgarð manna sonum,
 en ór hans heila váru þau in harðmóðgu
 ský qll um sköpuð.

34. 'More snakes lie under the ash of Yggdrasill
than any unwise ape¹⁵⁴ would think;¹⁵⁵
Góinn¹⁵⁶ and Móinn¹⁵⁷ — they are Grafvitnir's¹⁵⁸ sons —
Grábakr¹⁵⁹ and Grafvölluðr;¹⁶⁰
Ófnir¹⁶¹ and Sváfnir¹⁶² I think must always
wear away at the tree's twigs.¹⁶³
35. 'The ash of Yggdrasill suffers hardship,
more than men may know;
a stag bites it from above,¹⁶⁴ and its side rots,
Niðhoggr gnaws it from beneath.¹⁶⁵
36. 'Hrist¹⁶⁶ and Mist¹⁶⁷ I want to bring me a horn,
Skeggjold¹⁶⁸ and Skögul,¹⁶⁹
Hildi¹⁷⁰ and Þrúði,¹⁷¹
Hlókk¹⁷² and Herfjötur,¹⁷³
Goll¹⁷⁴ and Geirölul,¹⁷⁵
Randgríð¹⁷⁶ and Ráðgríð¹⁷⁷ and Reginleif;¹⁷⁸
they bring ale to the unique champions.¹⁷⁹
37. 'Árvakr¹⁸⁰ and Alsviðr,¹⁸¹ those scrawny ones must drag
Sól up from here;¹⁸²
but under their shoulders kindly powers,
Æsir,¹⁸³ concealed iron coolers(?).¹⁸⁴
38. 'Svöl is its name¹⁸⁵ — it stands before Sól —
a shield, [before] the shining god;¹⁸⁶
I know that rocks and surf shall burn up,
if it falls away from it.
39. 'Sköll¹⁸⁷ is the name of the wolf which pursues the shiny-faced god¹⁸⁸
to the shelter of the wood;¹⁸⁹
and the other, Hati,¹⁹⁰ he is Hróðvitnir's son,
he must be before the shining bride of the sky.¹⁹¹
40. 'From Ymir's¹⁹² flesh the earth was formed,
and from his "sweat"¹⁹³ the sea,
boulders from his bones, trees from his hair,
and from his skull the sky.¹⁹⁴
41. 'And from his eyelashes¹⁹⁵ the kindly powers made
Miðgarðr¹⁹⁶ for the sons of men,
and from his brain all those hard-hearted
clouds were created.

42. 'Ullar hylli hefr ok allra goða,
hverr er tekr fyrstr á funa,
þvíat opnir heimar verða um Ása sonum,
þá er hefja af hvera.
43. 'Ívalda synir gengu í árdaga
Skíðblaðni at skapa,
skipa bezt, skírum Frey,
nýtum Njarðar bur.
44. 'Askr Yggdrasils, hann er œztr viða,
en Skíðblaðnir skipa,
Óðinn Ása, en jóa Sleipnir,
Bilrost brúa, en Bragi skálda,
Hábrók hauka, en hunda Garmr,
en Brimir sverða.
45. 'Svipum hefi ek nú ypt fyr sigtiva sonum;
við þat skal vilbjørg vaka;
þllum Ásum þat skal inn koma,
Ægis bekki á,
Ægis drekku at.
46. 'Hétumk Grímr, hétumk Gangleri,
Herjan ok Hjálberi,
Þekkr ok Þriði, Pundr ok Uðr,
Helblindi ok Hár.
47. 'Saðr ok Svipall ok Sangetall,
Herteitr ok Hnikarr,
Bileygr, Báleygr, Bolverkr, Fjölnir,
Grímr ok Grímnir, Glapsviðr ok Fjölsviðr.
48. 'Síðhöttr, Síðskeggr, Sigföðr, Hnikuðr,
Alföðr, Valföðr, Atríðr ok Farmatýr;
einu nafni hétumk aldregi,
síz ek með fólkum fór.
49. 'Grímni mik hétu at Geirraðar,
en Jálk at Ásmundar,
en þá Kjalar er ek kjálka dró,
Þrór þingum at,
Viðurr at vígum,
Óski ok Ómi, Jafnhár ok Biflindi,
Göndlir ok Hárbarðr með goðum.

42. 'Whoever first takes hold of the fire¹⁹⁷ will have the favour
of Ullr and of all gods,¹⁹⁸
because worlds¹⁹⁹ become open²⁰⁰ around²⁰¹ the sons of the Æsir,²⁰²
when the cauldrons are taken off.²⁰³
43. 'Ívaldi's sons went in early days
to build Skíðblaðnir,²⁰⁴
best of ships, for shining Freyr,²⁰⁵
for the able son of Njörðr.²⁰⁶
44. 'The ash of Yggdrasill, it's the greatest of trees,
and Skíðblaðnir of ships,
Óðinn of Æsir,²⁰⁷ and Sleipnir of steeds,²⁰⁸
Bilröst of bridges,²⁰⁹ and Bragi of poets,²¹⁰
Hábrók of hawks,²¹¹ and Garmr of hounds,²¹²
and Brimir of swords.²¹³
45. 'I have now lifted my fleeting disguises²¹⁴ before the
sons of the victory gods,²¹⁵
with that, welcome relief²¹⁶ shall awake;
for²¹⁷ all the Æsir²¹⁸ it shall come inside,
to Ægir's benches,
at Ægir's drinking feast.²¹⁹
46. 'They called me Grímr,²²⁰ they called me Gangleri,²²¹
Herjan²²² and Hjálberi,²²³
Þekkr²²⁴ and Þriði,²²⁵ Þundr²²⁶ and Uðr,²²⁷
Helblindi²²⁸ and Hár.²²⁹
47. 'Saðr²³⁰ and Svipall²³¹ and Sangetall,²³²
Herteitr²³³ and Hnikarr,²³⁴
Bileygr,²³⁵ Báleygr,²³⁶ Bólverkr,²³⁷ Fjölnir,²³⁸
Grímr²³⁹ and Grímnir,²⁴⁰ Glapsviðr²⁴¹ and Fjölsviðr.²⁴²
48. 'Síðhöttr,²⁴³ Síðskeggr,²⁴⁴ Sigfǫðr,²⁴⁵ Hníkuðr,²⁴⁶
Alfǫðr,²⁴⁷ Valfǫðr,²⁴⁸ Atriðr²⁴⁹ and Farmatýr,²⁵⁰
by one name they have never called me,
since I travelled among troops.²⁵¹
49. 'Grímnir they called me at Geirrøðr's,
and Jákr²⁵² at Ásmundr's,²⁵³
and then Kjalarr²⁵⁴ when I drew a sledge;²⁵⁵
Þróðr²⁵⁶ at assemblies,²⁵⁷
Viðurri²⁵⁸ in battles,²⁵⁹
Óski²⁶⁰ and Ómi,²⁶¹ Jafnhárd²⁶² and Biflindi,²⁶³
Göndlir²⁶⁴ and Hárbarðr²⁶⁵ among the gods.

50. 'Sviðurr ok Sviðrir er ek hét at Sókkmímis,
ok dulða ek þann inn aldna jötun,
þá er ek Miðviðnis vark ins mæra burar
orðinn einn bani.
51. 'Qlr ertu, Geirrøðr, hefr þú ofdrukkit!
Miklu ertu hnugginn er þú ert mínu gengi,
qlum einherjum ok Óðins hylli.
52. 'Fjolð ek þér sagða, en þú fátt um mant —
of þik véla vinir;
mæki liggja ek sé míns vinar
allan í dreyra drifinn!
53. 'Eggmóðan val nú mun Yggr hafa,
þitt veit ek líf um liðit;
úfar ru dísir — nú knáttu Óðin sjá,
nálgaztu mik, ef þú megin!
54. 'Óðinn ek nú heiti, Yggr ek áðan hét,
héumk Þundr fyrir þat;
Vakr ok Skilfingr, Váfuðr ok Hroptatýr,
Gautr ok Jálkr með goðum,
Ófnir ok Sváfnir, er ek hygg at orðnir sé
allir af einum mér.'

Geirrøðr konungr sat ok hafði sverð um kné sér, ok brugðit til miðs. En er hann heyrði at Óðinn var þar kominn, stóð hann upp ok vildi taka Óðin frá eldinum. Sverðit slapp ór hendi honum, vissu hjóltin niðr. Konungr drap fœti ok steyptisk áfram, en sverðit stóð í gógnum hann, ok fekk hann bana. Óðinn hvarf þá. En Agnarr var þar konungr lengi síðan.

50. 'Sviðurr²⁶⁶ and Sviðrir²⁶⁷ when I was named at Sǫkkmímir's,²⁶⁸
 and I concealed it from that ancient giant,
 when I alone had become slayer
 of the eminent son of Miðviðnir.²⁶⁹
51. 'You're drunk, Geirrøðr, you've drunk too much!²⁷⁰
 You're robbed of much when you're not in *my* company,²⁷¹
 [namely] all the unique champions and Óðinn's favour.
52. 'Much have I told you, but few things you remember —
 friends deceive you;²⁷²
 I see the sword of *my* friend²⁷³ lying
 all soaked in blood!
53. 'Your edge-weary corpse²⁷⁴ Yggr²⁷⁵ will now have,
 your life, I know, has ebbed away;
 the spirit-women²⁷⁶ are angry — now you can see Óðinn,
 approach *me*,²⁷⁷ if you can!
54. 'I am called Óðinn now, I was called Yggr earlier,²⁷⁸
 they called me Pundr before that;²⁷⁹
 Vakr²⁸⁰ and Skilfingr²⁸¹, Váfuðr²⁸² and Hroptatýr,²⁸³
 Gautr²⁸⁴ and Jálkr²⁸⁵ among the gods,
 Ófnir and Sváfnir,²⁸⁶ all of which I think have
 arisen from me alone.'

King Geirrøðr sat and had a sword on his knee, and it was drawn to the middle. And when he heard that Óðinn had come there, he stood up and wanted to take Óðinn from the fires. The sword slipped from his hand, the hilt pointed downwards. The king lost his footing and toppled forward, and the sword ran him through, and he got his death. Óðinn disappeared then. And Agnarr was king there for a long time after.

Textual Apparatus to *Grímnismál*

Frá sonum Hrauðungs konungs] These rubricated but faded words are illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this edition therefore relies on the transcription therein, which brackets these words; A *fra hrauðvngi konvngi* ‘About King Hrauðungr’

Hrauðungr] The first letter is a large and inset in R

annarr] A *annarr* s. (with *annarr* inserted above the abbreviation)

dorgar] A *dorgir*

Í náttmyrkri brutu þeir] A *þær brutu ináttmyrkri*

en karl Geirrøð] so R; A *æn karl fostraði geirrøð. ok kændi honum rað* ‘and the old man fostered Geirrøðr and gave him advice’

þau kerling] so A; R *kerling þau*

til strandar] A *til skips* ‘to the ship’

fjðurs] A *fjðvr*

Farðu] A *Far þv nv* ‘Go now’

rak út] A *rak i haf vt* ‘rode out to sea’

upp] so A; R *vt* ‘out’

bœjar] A *bœia*

var] A *var þar*

Þá var faðir hans] A *æn faðir hans var þa* ‘and his father was then’

Var þá Geirrøðr] A *GæiRøðr var þa*

Hliðskjálfu] A *hliðskialf*

heima alla] A *alla heima*

En Geirrøðr, fóstri minn, er konungr ok sitr nú at landi] A *ænn* (ær above line) *konvngr fostri minn* ok sitr at londvm

in] A *hin*

eskismey] A *æski mæy*

inn] A *hinn*

Geirrøðr] A *gæiRøðr konvngr*

Ok þó lætr] A *ænn þo lætr konvngr*

ráða] A *hlavpa*

pína] A *pina hann*

tveggja] A *absent*

hann] A *absent*

átti] A *atti þa*

pau kerling] so **A**; **R** *kerling pau*

fullt] so **A**; **R** *fult*

Sagði] **A** *ok sagði*

at konungr gørði illa] **A** *at faðir hans gærði*

er hann lét sína hann saklausan] **A** *ær hann pinni þænna mann saklavsan*

Grímnismál] The title is rubricated but illegible, due to fading, in the photograph in the facsimile volume of **R**; this edition therefore relies here on its transcription in the facsimile volume and on **A**

1/1 *Heitr*] The first letter is large, inset, rubricated but faded in **R**

1/5 *berak*] **A** *væra*

2/2 *milli*] **A** *millum*

2/6 *sonr*] **A** *son*

4/6 *um*] **A** *of*

5/4 *Frey*] **R** corrected from *freyr* by underdotting

6/1 *inn*] **A** *hin*

7/1 *inn*] **A** *hinn*

7/1 *ffjórði*] **A** *fjorð*; **R** has a roman numeral

8/1 *heitir*] **A** *ær* ‘is’

8/1 *inn*] **A** *hinn*

8/2 *in*] **A** *hin*

8/3 *Valhöll*] **R** corrected from *vaulhlaull* (or perhaps *vailhlaill*) by underdotting

8/3 *of*] **A** absent

9/2 *til*] **A** absent

Originally, the scribe of **R** mistakenly put stanza 9 after stanza 10, but he did subsequently indicate their correct order

10/2–3 *þeim er til Óðins koma, salkynni at siá*] **A** *þæim ær. t. k. s. at sia*

10/2–3] **R** abbreviates *þ. er o. k. s. k.*

11/1 *inn*] **A** *hinn*

11/6 *fornar*] **A** *forna*

12/1 *Breiðablik*] **R** *Breiða*, corrected to *Breiðablik* by a later hand; **A** *Bræiða blio*

12/1 *in*] **A** *hin*

12/1 *sjúndu*] **A** *siavnndv*

13/1 *in*] **A** *hin*

13/6 *inn*] **R** absent; **A** *hin*

14/1 *inn*] **A** *hinn*

15/1 *er inn*] **A** *h. e.* (abbreviation for *heitir enn*)

15/3 *it*] **A** *hit*

16/1 *eru in*] **A** *ær. h.*

16/5 *inn*] **A** *hinn*

16/6 *hǫrgi*] so **A**; **R** *haurg*

16/6 *ræðr*] so **A**; **R** absent

17/3 *Víðars*] so **A**; **R** *vinpars*

17/6 *at*] **R** and **A** have the Tironian sign for *ok* 'and'

18/6 *við*] **R** and **A** absent; supplied from *SnEGylf*

18/6 *einherjar*] **A** *æinhæria*

20/1 *Muninn*] **R** *muNiN*; **A** *mvninn*

20/4 *of*] so **R** (interlined); **A** *vm*

20/4 *Hugin*] **A** corrects *hvgim* to *hvgin* by underdotting

20/5 *komit*] **R** *comib*; **A** *komi*

20/6 *sjámk*] **A** *siamz ek*

20/6 *Munin*] **R** *mwniN*; **A** *mvninn*

21/1 *þund*] **A** *þvndr*

21/5 *pikkir*] **R** absent

21/6 *valglaumi*] **A** *valglavmni*

22/3 *durum*] **A** *dyrvom*

22/6 *lokin*] **A** *vm lokin*

23/1 *Fimm hundruð*] **A** abbreviates *Fim. h.*

23/3 *bugum*] **R** corrects *bvgomo* to *bvgom* by underdotting

23] **A** places this stanza after stanza 24

24/3 *hygg*] **A** *kvæt* 'say'

24/3 *Valhøllu*] **A** *valhøll*

24/5 *ganga*] **A** *ganga senn* 'go at the same time'

24/5 *durum*] **A** *dyrum*

24/6 *at vitni*] **A** *við vitni*

25/2 *Herjafǫðrs*] **A** *hæriafǫðvr*

25/6 *knádat*] **A** *kann*

26/2 *høllu*] **A** *hællv*

- 26/3 *Læraðs limum*] **A** abbreviates *l. l.*
- 26/6 *eigu*] **A** *æiga*
- 27/2 *Eikin*] **A** *ækin*
- 27/3 *ok*] not visible in **A**, due to smudge
- 28/1 *Vín á*] so **R**; **A** *Vina*
- 28/1 *ein*] **R** *enn*; **A** *ænn*
- 28/2 *Vegsvinn*] **A** *væg svin*
- 28/8 *Ván*] **A** *vað*
- 28/12 *en*] so **A** *ænn*; **R** *er* ‘which’
- 29/4 *hverjan dag*] **A** *dag hværn*
- 29/8 *loga*] so **A**; **R** *logo*
- 30/2 *Gler*] **A** *glær*
- 30/3 *Silfrintoppr*] so **A**; **R** *silfrintoptr* corrected to *silfrintopr* by underdotting
- 30/4 *Falhófnir*] **A** *falæpnir*
- 30/6 *jóm*] **A** *iovum*
- 30/8 *þeir dæma fara*] **A** *ær dæma*
- 31/4 *undir*] **A** *und*
- 32/1 *Ratatoskr*] **A** *Raratoskr*
- 32/3 *Yggdrasils*] so **A**; **R** *yGdrasis*
- 33/2 *hæfingar*] **A** *hæfingiar*
- 33/3 *gaghálsir*] so **A**; **R** *agaghalsir*
- 33/3 *gnaga*] **A** *ganga*
- 33/5 *Duneyrr ok Duraphrór*] **A** *dynæyR ok dyraphror*
- 34/3 *þat*] **A** absent
- 34/3 *uf*] **A** of
- 34/3 *ósviðra*] **A** *osvinnra*
- 34/5 *þeir eru*] **A** *þærirro*
- 34/7 *Ófnir*] **A** *opnir*
- 34/9 *meiðs*] **A** *mæiðar*
- 35/3 *viti*] **A** of *viti*
- 36/3 *Skeggjold*] **A** *skægg ɔlld*
- 36/4 *Hildi ok Þrúði*] **A** *hilldr ok þrvðr* (i.e., *Hildr ok Þrúðr*)
- 36/6 *Geirölul*] **A** *gæirrømol*

36/8 *ok*] so **A**; **R** absent

36/9 *ql*] **A** corrects *ql* to *ql* by underdotting

38/1 *Svql*] **A** *Svalin*

38/3 *goði*] **A** *gvði*

39/2 *inu*] **A** *hinu*

39/3 *varna*] **A** corrects *vavna* to *varna*

39/5 *hann er*] **A** absent

39/5 *sonr*] **A** *svn*

40/3 *sær*] **A** *sior*

40/5 *baðmr*] **A** *baðrmr*

41/6 *um*] **A** of

42/1 *hefr*] **A** *hæfir*

42/5 *um*] **A** of

42/6 *pá er*] **A** *þa ær þær*

43/1 *Ívalda*] **A** *Ivallda*

44/6 *Bilrost*] Inserted above the line in **A**

44/9 *Garmr*] **A** *gramr*

44/10 *en Brimir sverða*] so **A** *enn brimir sværða*; **R** absent

45/1 *nú*] **A** absent

45/1 *ypt*] Two letters erased before this word at the start of the line in **R**

45/2 *sigtíva*] **A** *sigtifa*

45/7 *drekku*] **A** *dryKiv*

46/1–2 *Hétumk Grímr, hétumk Gangleri*] **A** *Hætvmz grimr ok ganglæri*

46/5 *Pundr*] **A** *þvðr*

46/5 *ok*] Inserted above the line in **R**

46/6 *Helblindi*] **A** *hærblindr* ‘Army Blind/Hidden One’

46/6 *ok*] Inserted above the line in **R**

48/2 *Sigføðr*] **A** *sigfæðr* (with a mark above the -æ-)

48/3 *Valføðr*] **A** absent

48/6 *hétumk aldregi*] **A** *hætvmz*

48/7 *með*] **A** absent

49/3 *Ásmundar*] so **A**; **R** *qsmundar*

49/4 *en þá Kjalar*] *enn þa ialk*

49/7 *Viðurr at vígum*] A *viður at vigvm*; R absent

50/3 *inn*] A *hinn*

50/4 *er*] Added in margin in R

50/4 *Miðviðnis*] A *miðvitnis*

50/4 *vark*] A *var*

50/5 *ins*] A *hins*

50/6 *einn bani*] A *æinbani*

51/2 *hefr*] A *hæfir*

51/4 *gengi*] A *gæði*

52/1 *sagða*] A *sagðac*

52/2 *fátt*] so A; R *fat*

53/2 *mun*] A *man*

53/3 *um*] A *of*

53/4 *úfar ru*] so paper manuscripts; R *varar ro*; A *vvaRro*

53/6 *nálgaztu*] so A; R *nalgazstv*

54/3 *hétumk*] A *hætvmz*

54/8 *er*] A absent

54/9 *af*] A *at*

Final prose *Óðinn*] A abbreviates *.o.*

Final prose *vildi*] A *vill* ‘wants’

Final prose *Óðin*] A abbreviates *.o.*

Final prose *vissu*] A *ok vissv* ‘and pointed’

Final prose *steyptisk*] A *stæyttiz*

Final prose *sverðit*] A *sværð*

Final prose *gognum*] A *gægnvm*

Final prose *fekk hann bana*] A *fæK þar af bana*

Final prose *Óðinn hvarf þá*] A absent

Final prose *En Agnarr var þar konungr lengi síðan*] A *Enn agnarr varð konvngr* ‘And Agnarr became king’

Notes to the Translation

- 1 King Hrauðungr is obscure, but his name probably means 'Destroyer'. Another Hrauðungr appears in *Hdl.* 26; a sea-king of this name is found in a name-list in *SnEskáld* (I, 75, p. 110); and a giant is so named in *SnEskáld* (I, 75, p. 114) and *Hjálmpés saga ok Qlvís* 'The Saga of Hjálmpér and Qlvir'. *Agnarr* 'Terrifying Army' and *Geirrøðr* 'Spear Peace' (elsewhere a giant-name) are also obscure figures.
- 2 Here A adds that the old man gave him advice. The fosterers are presumably the smallholder and his wife, whose identities we learn shortly.
- 3 Geirrøðr, the younger son, exiles his elder brother in order to inherit the kingdom in his stead. His words probably serve as a spell of banishment, most likely taught to him by the 'old man' during their private talk. 'Fiends' is a loose translation of the obscure noun *smyl*, which seems to have denoted some kind of monstrous being.
- 4 I.e., it was driven out to sea.
- 5 *SnEGylf* (9, p. 13) identifies *Hliðskjálf* 'Door/Inlet Shelf' as a place in *Ásgarðr* 'Áss/God Court' containing a high-seat, from which Óðinn can see all worlds.
- 6 The old man was Óðinn in disguise; the old woman was Frigg.
- 7 *Fulla*, probably 'Bountiful One', is one of the *Ásynjur* 'goddesses' according to *SnEGylf* (35, p. 29), which identifies her as a virgin who carries Frigg's ashen box (*eski*).
- 8 Literally, a 'much-knowing man', one skilled in malevolent magic.
- 9 'Masked One', an alias of Óðinn. The dark blue of his cloak forbodes death.
- 10 The following revelatory poem is probably recited during the ninth night, a time of transformational suffering in other myths; cf. *Háv.* 138–39, *FSk.* 39, 41.
- 11 A term for 'fire'.
- 12 Literally 'Goths', but the term may denote humankind in general. The last line of this stanza does not conform to the *ljóðaháttir* otherwise used in stanzas 1 to 26.
- 13 I.e., healthy, well.
- 14 'God of Men', an alias of Óðinn.
- 15 'Power Home'. It is possibly the aforementioned holy land.
- 16 The ruling gods will die violently at Ragnarok.
- 17 'Yew Dales'.
- 18 Literally, 'they're called', the noun and verb being pl.
- 19 A god whose name appears cognate with OE *wuldor* 'brilliance, glory'. *SnEGylf* (31, p. 26) identifies him as Sif's son and Þórr's stepson, a handsome warrior and an unrivalled archer and skier, to whom it is good to pray in single combat. 'Yew Dales' is a fitting home for an archer, as yew wood was used for making bows.
- 20 'Elf Home'. In *SnEGylf* (17, p. 19) Álfheimr is the home of the 'light-elves'. Here it might contain, or form part of, Ýdalir, and its owner, *Freyr* 'Lord' (a god described as *bjartr* 'bright' in *Vsp.* 52 and *skírr* 'shining' in *Grm.* 43) or a *freyr* 'lord', might be a young version of the implicitly brilliant Ullr.
- 21 I.e., as a gift for Freyr's first tooth.

- 22 The arithmetic is correct if the holy land and Prúðheimr of *Vm.* 4 may be taken together as the site of one homestead and the same is true of Ýdalir and Álfheimr in *Vm.* 5. Otherwise, some clumsy interpolation or other textual corruption may have occurred.
- 23 'Váli's Shelf', Váli being Baldr's avenger; alternatively, perhaps *Valaskjálf* 'Shelf of the Slaughtered(?)'.
- 24 One of the *Æsir*, possibly Váli; alternatively, just 'a god'.
- 25 According to *SnEGylf* (17, p. 20), Valaskjálf is a 'big place' belonging to Óðinn; the gods built it and roofed it with silver, and Óðinn's high-seat Hliðskjálf is inside it.
- 26 'Sunken Bank/Beck' or perhaps 'Bank/Beck of Treasures'.
- 27 *SnEGylf* (35, p. 29) says *Sága* 'Seeress/Sayer(?)' is the second of the Ásynjur after Frigg, and that she lives at Sókkvabekkr, which is a 'big place'. Possibly *Sága* (cf. *soga* 'to suck?') was originally another name for Frigg, whose home in *Vsp.* 33 is the watery *Fensalir* 'Fen-Halls'.
- 28 'Home of Gladness' or 'Glade's Home'. In *SnEGylf* (14, p. 15) Glaðsheimr is the site of a golden temple to the gods.
- 29 The 'Hall of the Slain', to which the *einherjar* 'unique/only champions' repair.
- 30 An alias of Óðinn.
- 31 Literally 'weapon-dead men'. The reference is to the *einherjar*, noblemen killed in battle who are selected by valkyries, at Óðinn's command, to live in his hall, Valhöll, before fighting beside him at Ragnarok.
- 32 Or 'It's [i.e., the hall is] very easily recognized'.
- 33 Or simply 'to Óðinn'.
- 34 Spear-shafts.
- 35 Valhöll, to which the *einherjar* come; cf. *Grm.* 24. It is similarly described as roofed with gilded shields in *SnEGylf* (2, p. 2).
- 36 Or 'criminal'.
- 37 'Thunder Home'.
- 38 Þjazi was a giant slain by the gods for kidnapping the goddess Iðunn and her apples; see *Haust.*, *SnESkáld* (I, G56, pp. 1–2), *SPSMA* III, 431–63; also *Hrbl.* 19.
- 39 The giantess Skaði won the right to choose a divine husband as part of a compensation package for the slaying of her father, Þjazi. She had to make her choice at a beauty contest in which she could see only the gods' lower legs and feet. She chose the most attractive pair, thinking they must be Baldr's, only to discover that they were the smooth, clean limbs of the sea-god Njörðr; see *SnESkáld* (I, G56, p. 2). The couple hated each other's homes (*SnEGylf* 23, pp. 23–24) and, according to chapter 8 of *Ynglinga saga*, Skaði left Njörðr for Óðinn. *SnESkáld* (I, 75, p. 114) includes Skaði among the Ásynjur.
- 40 This stanza is quoted in variant form in *SnEGylf* (23, p. 24), *SnEUpp* (18, p. 42).
- 41 'Broad-Shining Ones'.
- 42 ON *feiknstafr*, which corresponds to OE *facenstafas* in *Beowulf* l. 1018, denotes evil rune-staves, which signify deceits, falsehoods and malign intentions. *SnEGylf* (22, p. 23) says there is nothing *óhreint* 'impure' in Breiðablik, and that there is no fairer place (17, p. 19).
- 43 This stanza is quoted in variant form in *SnEGylf* (22, p. 23), *SnEUpp* (18, p. 40).
- 44 'Sky Rocks/Mountains' or 'Sky Help/Deliverance'; the former sense might describe towering clouds; it could also reflect an inference from the discovery of meteorites.

- 45 Heimdallr.
- 46 This stanza is quoted in variant form in *SnEGylf* (27, p. 26), *SnEUpp* (20, p. 44). *SnEGylf* (17, p. 20) says Himinbjorg *stendr á himins enda við brúar sporð, þar er Bifrost kemr til himins* ‘stands at the end of the sky by the end of the bridge, where Bifrost [the celestial bridge] reaches the sky’.
- 47 ‘Folk/Host Plain’, possibly a term for ‘battlefield’.
- 48 Some seating positions were more prestigious than others.
- 49 This stanza is quoted in variant form in *SnEGylf* (24, p. 24), *SnEUpp* (19, p. 42). Cf. *Hrbl.* 24.
- 50 ‘Glittering One’.
- 51 ‘Chairman’, an obscure god. *SnEGylf* (32, p. 26) identifies him as one of the Æsir, the son of Baldr and Nanna (Baldr’s wife), and adds that all who bring tough legal disputes to his heavenly hall, Glitnir, leave with their differences settled.
- 52 This stanza is quoted in variant form in *SnEGylf* (32, p. 26), *SnEUpp* (20, p. 46). *SnEGylf* (17, pp. 19–20) says Glitnir’s walls, supports and pillars are made of red gold, and its roof of silver.
- 53 ‘Ships’ Yards’, potentially a term for ‘sea’.
- 54 Or ‘temple’, ‘shrine’; see note to *Vsp.* 7.
- 55 Cf. *Háv.* 119.
- 56 Or perhaps ‘is Víðarr’s land, Viði’.
- 57 Víðarr’s lands possibly lie unintended because his sole purpose is to avenge the death of his father, Óðinn, at Ragnarok (cf. *Vsp.* 53).
- 58 These three names probably mean essentially ‘One Exposed to Soot’, ‘Sea-Sooty One’ and ‘Fire-Sooty One’, respectively.
- 59 This stanza is quoted in *SnEGylf* (38, p. 32), *SnEUpp* (25, p. 56). According to *SnEGylf*, the cook Andhrímnir boils the boar Sæhrímnir twice a day in the pot Eldhrímnir, to feed the host of the slain in Valhöll.
- 60 ‘Father of Armies’, an alias of Óðinn.
- 61 Óðinn’s wolves. Both names mean ‘Greedy One’.
- 62 This stanza is quoted in *SnEGylf* (38, p. 32), *SnEUpp* (25, p. 56).
- 63 *Huginn* ‘Thoughtful One’ and *Muninn* ‘Mindful One’ are Óðinn’s ravens. On returning from their travels, they sit on his shoulders and speak the news they have gathered into his ears. Contrast the ‘heron of oblivion’ in *Háv.* 13.
- 64 This stanza is quoted in variant form in *SnEGylf* (38, pp. 32–33), *SnEUpp* (25, p. 56).
- 65 An obscure passage, for which various interpretations have been proposed. *Pund(r)* ‘Thunderous/Swollen One’ is probably a noisy, violent river (cf. *Grm.* 29), not necessarily terrestrial, though *Pundr* (the reading of A) is also a name of Óðinn in *Grm.* 46, 54. *Pjóðvitnir*, interpreted as ‘Great Wolf’, is sometimes thought to describe Fenrir (cf. *vitnir* in *Grm.* 24, *Hróðvitnir* in *Grm.* 39, *Hróðsvitnir* in *Ls.* 39), whose ‘fish’ could be either his sibling, Miðgarðsormr, or the sun, which he will devour at Ragnarok; then again, the translation ‘Pund roars, a fish resides contentedly in Pjóðvitnir’s flood’ is grammatically possible, in which case the flood might be the river of slaver running from the jaws of the bound Fenrir. However, a more cohesive interpretation, especially in the context of

the surrounding stanzas, identifies *Bjóðvitnir*, interpreted as ‘Great Discerning (One)’, as Heimdallr. Albeit surprisingly, his ‘fish’ might be the heavenly bridge Bifrost/Bilrost, given that when *SnEGylf* (17, p. 20) locates Himinbjorg (Heimdallr’s home in *Grm.* 13) ‘at the sky’s end by the bridge’s end (*við brúar sporð*)’, where Bifrost reaches the sky’, the term *sporð* used for the bridge’s end elsewhere denotes a fish’s tail (cf. *Sd.* 16); the bridge’s contentedness might contrast with its breaking in *Fm.* 15. (This interpretation follows Eysteinn Björnsson, ‘When is a Fish a Bridge? An Investigation of Grímnismál 21’ (27 April 2000), formerly available at <http://notendur.hi.is/eybjorn/ugm/grm21.html>; see also <http://www.germanicmythology.com/PoeticEdda/GRM21.html>)

- 66 The second half of this stanza is also rather obscure. R’s *valglaumi* (A has *valglaumni*), interpreted as the dat. sg. of an otherwise unattested compound *valglaumr*, might denote a *glaumr* ‘(cheerfully noisy) horse’ (*Sleipnir?*) bearing a man killed in battle (*val*). Another possibility is that the word denotes ‘the rejoicing slain’, with reference to the desire to fall in battle, rather than expire of old age. Either way, the intended destination is probably Valhöll, which, since the river Pund cannot be crossed by wading, might be reached via the bridge Bifrost/Bilrost. Cf. *Grm.* 29, *Fm.* 15; for the dead as waders, see also *Vsp.* 38, *Rm.* 3–4.
- 67 *Valgrind* ‘Gate of the Slain’ is otherwise unknown, but quite possibly the *einherjar*, having crossed the bridge linking the worlds of humans and gods, pass through this gate to enter Valhöll.
- 68 Here ‘hundred’ is the old Germanic hundred of 120; the total is therefore 640.
- 69 Possibly ‘Momentarily Cleansed/Shining One’, which might refer to lightning emitted by the home of a thunder-god.
- 70 This stanza is quoted in variant form in *SnEGylf* (21, p. 22), *SnEUpp* (18, p. 38). Snorri identifies Bilskírnir as Þórr’s hall.
- 71 A total of 640, as in *Grm.* 23.
- 72 Actually, 960.
- 73 This stanza is quoted in variant form in *SnEGylf* (40, p. 33), *SnEUpp* (25, p. 58). The wolf is Fenrir, whom Óðinn and his chosen warriors fight at Ragnarok.
- 74 In this name, *Heið-* possibly comes from *Heiðþyrnir*, the name of the lowest heaven in Norse mythology, in which case this element would refer principally to ‘heavenly brightness’ (for the likely associated use of *-þyrnir* in *Eikþyrnir*, see the next stanza). But *heið-* could also suggest ‘pure/clean’, ‘honour’, ‘fee’, ‘heath’, ‘heathen’; note also the seeress *Heiðr* in *Vsp.* 22, who might be identifiable as the *Gullveig* ‘Gold Intoxicating Drink’ of *Vsp.* 21. The second element, *-rún*, could suggest ‘rune/secret’, ‘run’ and maybe even a mead-serving valkyrie. A Norwegian adjective, *heidrun*, applied to cows slightly unwell from overgrazing, raises the possibility that *Heiðrún* overindulged on Læraðr’s branches. She is also mentioned in *Hdl.* 46–47.
- 75 *SnEGylf* (39, p. 33) identifies the hall as Valhöll.
- 76 I.e., branches. The tree *Læraðr* also appears as *Léraðr* in a derived passage in *SnEGylf* (39, p. 33); it is perhaps a form of the world-tree (cf. *Grm.* 35), from which dripped a sugary substance associated with honey, the main ingredient of mead. The meaning of *Læraðr* is obscure, but perhaps note the weapon *Lævateinn* ‘Twig of Treacheries’, which seems to have been taken from the world-tree, in *Fj.* 26. The goat *Heiðrún* is also obscure; the same passage in *SnEGylf* says that mead flows from her udder, enough to fill a vat from which all the unique champions can drink their fill.

- 77 The vat was apparently created, or shaped, specifically for this purpose.
- 78 The first element of this name, *eik-*, means 'oak' or, more generally, 'tree'. The second, *þyrnir* ('overcast?'), was possibly extracted from *Heiðþyrnir*, one form of the name of the lowest heaven of Old Norse mythology (cf. the probably associated origin of the goat-name *Heiðrún* in the previous stanza); there may be a pun on 'thorny', the stag's tines being likened to thorns.
- 79 *Hvergelmir* 'Cauldron/Basin Roarer' is mentioned several times in *SnEGylf* as a well or spring.
- 80 This stanza is paraphrased in *SnEGylf* (39, p. 33), which provides no more information about *Eikþyrnir*.
- 81 *Grm.* 27–29 l. 1 list mythical rivers.
- 82 Possibly 'Long One', 'Low-Lying One' or 'Late/Slow One'. Either way, it is the name of a mythical river, like all the other names down to *Grm.* 29 l. 1. Cf. *SnEGylf* (4, p. 9; 39, p. 33).
- 83 'Wide One'.
- 84 'Forward-Rushing One'. *SnEGylf* (39, p. 33) has *Sekin*.
- 85 'Driven One' or 'Wild/Powerful One'. *SnEGylf* (39, p. 33) has *Ekin*.
- 86 'Cool One'.
- 87 Possibly 'Battle Trough'. This name recurs in *SnEGylf* (39, p. 33), but *SnEGylf* (4, p. 9) has *Gunnþrá* 'Battle Throe(s)/Obstinacy'. This line lacks alliteration.
- 88 'Rushing One'.
- 89 'Mighty Murmuring One'.
- 90 The Rhine.
- 91 'Running One'.
- 92 Perhaps 'Gabbling One'.
- 93 Possibly 'Gaping One'.
- 94 'Old One'.
- 95 'Spear-Swarming One'; in other words, a river containing many spears. Cf. *Vsp.* 36; also *Slið* and *Nöt* in *Grm.* 28.
- 96 These hoards are perhaps imagined as the centres of divine realms.
- 97 Possibly 'Thundering One'; alternatively, *Býn* 'Swollen One'.
- 98 Possibly the Dvina. The name perhaps denotes a river that dries up in summer, though *vín* also means 'wine'. Note also *Vín* in *Grm.* 28. The present line lacks alliteration but has rhyme.
- 99 Ostensibly 'Fir Tree', but perhaps etymologically 'Swollen One' or 'Quiet One'.
- 100 'Sloping One'. *SnEGylf* (39, p. 33) has *Böll*. This line lacks alliteration but has rhyme.
- 101 'Greedy One'.
- 102 'Battle-Daring One'. *SnEGylf* (39, p. 33) has *Gunnþráin*.
- 103 The *Vín* also appears in *Grm.* 27. A has *Vina* (presumably for *Vína*, the Dvina), which may be the better reading.
- 104 Possibly, *enn* 'moreover', 'also', 'still' was originally *ein* 'one'.
- 105 'Way-Swift/Wise One'. *SnEGylf* (39, p. 33) has *Veg*, *Svinn*.

- 106 Perhaps ‘Great Water-Container’, ‘Mightily Forceful Taker or ‘People Taker’.
- 107 ‘Useful One’.
- 108 ‘Wet One’. This name is also attested as a term for ‘spear’; cf. the rivers *Geirvimul* in *Grm.* 27, *Slíðr* in *Vsp.* 35 and *Slíð* in *Grm.* 28.
- 109 ‘Bold One’.
- 110 ‘Wave’.
- 111 ‘Dire’ or ‘Scabbard’; cf. *Slíðr* in *Vsp.* 35 and *SnEGylf* (4, p. 9).
- 112 ‘Storm’.
- 113 ‘Swallower’.
- 114 ‘She-Wolf’.
- 115 ‘Wide One’, as in *Grm.* 27; but it has been suggested this instance is a mistake for **Víl* ‘Misery, Despair’.
- 116 ‘Hope’ or ‘Expectation’. *Ván* is the name of the river of slaver running from the mouth of the bound Fenrir, according to *SnEGylf* (34, p. 29).
- 117 Probably ‘Difficult One’; alternatively, ‘Wand/Thin Stick’.
- 118 ‘Shore’.
- 119 ‘Din’.
- 120 ‘Lightning’; cf. *HH. II*, 31.
- 121 Or ‘flow’, as also in the next line.
- 122 The underworld land of the dead, or the female who presides over it. Cf. *Gg.* 8.
- 123 Perhaps ‘Dyked One’. *Kørmt* was formerly also the name of the Norwegian island now called Karmøy.
- 124 Possibly ‘Armed One’, referring to a delta.
- 125 ‘Tub-Bathings’.
- 126 The world-tree.
- 127 Or Áss-bridge (secondarily perhaps ‘beam-bridge’). Either way, the reference is doubtless to Bifrost/Bilrost, the bridge between the worlds of humans and gods; see *Grm.* 21, 44.
- 128 Or perhaps ‘holy waters roar’, the sense of the verb *hlóa* being uncertain. Then again, if -a in *hlóa* is a negative suffix, the sense is ‘holy waters do not boil/roar’. This stanza is quoted in variant form in *SnEGylf* (15, pp. 17-18), *SnEUpp* (14, p. 28).
- 129 ‘Glad/Bright One’; *SnEskáld* (I, 58, p. 90) records that this horse (alias *Skinfaxi* ‘Shining Mane’) accompanies the day.
- 130 ‘Golden One’ or ‘Gilder’.
- 131 Ostensibly ‘Glass’, but probably rather ‘Radiant One’; A has *Glær* ‘Glaring/Clear One’.
- 132 Possibly ‘Racetrack Surfer’ or ‘Race Foaming One’.
- 133 ‘Silver Forelock’.
- 134 ‘Sinewy One’.
- 135 Ostensibly ‘Hostage’, but perhaps rather ‘Shining One’.
- 136 ‘Fallow-Hoofed One’ or ‘Hidden-Hoofed One’.
- 137 ‘Gold Forelock’.
- 138 ‘Light Foot’.

- 139 Or ‘gods’.
- 140 A variant version of this stanza’s list of horses appears in *SnEGylf* (15, p. 17).
- 141 Literally, ‘stand’.
- 142 Cf. *Háv.* 138, *Fj.* 20.
- 143 Eponymous goddess of Hel, underworld of the dead.
- 144 Literally, ‘mannish men/people’.
- 145 ‘Augur’s Tooth’.
- 146 *SnEGylf* (16, p. 18) says an eagle sits in the world tree’s branches and is wise in many things. Its name has not survived.
- 147 *SnEGylf* (16, p. 18) has Ratatoskr running up and down the tree, conveying *gfundarorð* ‘malicious words’ between the eagle and Niðhoggr.
- 148 ‘Waning/Dark-Moon Striker’ or *Níðhoggr* ‘Malicious Striker’, a dragon also mentioned in *Vsp.*
- 149 I.e., the world-tree’s shoots. Here ‘shoots’ is an interpretation of *haefingar*, which may literally denote ‘things that raise themselves up’.
- 150 ‘(One Who Has) Died’.
- 151 ‘Delayed One’.
- 152 ‘Din-Eared’, ‘Dun-Eared’ or ‘Downy-Eared’.
- 153 Perhaps ‘Door Thriver/Boar’.
- 154 I.e., oaf, fool. Literally, ‘each of the unwise apes’.
- 155 *SnEGylf* (16, p. 18) says ‘so many snakes are in Hvergelmir with Niðhoggr that no tongue can recount them’.
- 156 Perhaps ‘One Who Lives Deep in the Earth’ or ‘Yawning One’.
- 157 ‘Moor-Dwelling One’.
- 158 ‘Grave/Pit Wolf’.
- 159 ‘Grey Back’.
- 160 Possibly ‘Grave/Pit-Digging/Making One’.
- 161 Possibly ‘Instigator’; alternatively, *Ofnir* ‘(Inter)woven One’, an allusion to a snake’s coils.
- 162 ‘One Who Lulls to Sleep’, i.e., perhaps, ‘Killer’.
- 163 I.e., by gnawing them. This stanza is quoted immediately after *Grm.* 35 in *SnEGylf* (16, p. 19); see also the variant in *SnEUp* (15, p. 32). A list of names for snakes in *SnESkáld* (I, 58, p. 90) includes Góinn, Móinn, *Grafvitnir*, *Grábakr*, Ófnir, *Sváfnir*.
- 164 Cf. *Grm.* 26; also *Grm.* 33, which mentions four stags.
- 165 This stanza is quoted immediately before *Grm.* 34 in *SnEGylf* (16, pp. 18–19); see also the variant in *SnEUp* (15, p. 30). *SnEGylf* (15, p. 17) records that Niðhoggr gnaws the bottom of one of the world-tree’s roots, the one that extends over Niflheimr and above Hvergelmir.
- 166 ‘Shaking One’.
- 167 ‘Mist’.
- 168 ‘Axe Age’.
- 169 Possibly ‘Outstanding One’.
- 170 ‘Battle’.

- 171 'Power'.
- 172 Perhaps 'Noise', 'Scream'.
- 173 'Army Fetter'.
- 174 'Tumult'.
- 175 *Geir-* means 'spear'.
- 176 'Shield-(Rim) Eager One'; alternatively, *Randgrið* 'Shield Truce'.
- 177 'Counsel Eager One'; alternatively, *Ráðgrið* 'Counsel Truce'.
- 178 '(Divine)-Power Leaving'; i.e., perhaps, 'Offspring of a Divine Power'.
- 179 The listed names are those of valkyries. This stanza is quoted in variant form in *SnEGylf* (36, p. 30), *SnEUp* (23, p. 54).
- 180 'Early Waker'.
- 181 'All-Swift'. Cf. *Sd.* 15.
- 182 Sól is the personified sun.
- 183 Or 'gods'.
- 184 Or 'cool irons', or possibly even 'ice coolers'. *SnEGylf* (11, pp. 13–14; see also *SnESkáld* I, 58, p. 90) identifies Árvakr and Alsviðr as horses that draw the chariot of the sun. It adds that the gods put two bellows under the horses' shoulders to cool them, and 'in some sources it is called iron-cool [*ísarnkol*]'.
- 185 'Cool One'.
- 186 This shield—in A called *Svalin*—is also mentioned in *Sd.* 15. Elsewhere, *Svalinn* appears in a list of poetic terms for 'shield' (*SPSMA* III, 825–26) and the sun itself is a '(sky)-shield' (*SPSMA* III, 85–86, VII, 172, 175–76). For the shining sun as a deity, cf. *Grm.* 39 and *Sd.* 15; also perhaps *Vm.* 46–47.
- 187 'Mockery'.
- 188 The sun.
- 189 A reference to the setting of the sun behind woods on the horizon. The wolf aims to catch and devour the sun.
- 190 'Hater'. Cf. the giant Hati in *HHv.* 11 pr.; they are not necessarily distinct.
- 191 At first sight, one might think the 'shining bride of the sky' is the moon. However, the standard Old Norse word for 'moon', *máni*, is masc., whereas words for sun (*sól*, *sunna*) are fem., and the sun is a woman in *Vsp.* 5 and *Vm.* 47. We may imagine the two wolves working together, with Sköll driving the divine sun (similarly described in *Sd.* 15) into the clutches of Hati, who is perhaps in the deceptive shelter of the wood. Rather similarly, one manuscript of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* calls the wolves *Skalli* and *Hatti*, records that they strive for the shining 'swallower of flame', and explains that *annarr þeira ferr fyrir, en annarr eptir sólu* 'one of them goes before, and the other after the sun'. Understandably, however, a belief developed that one wolf would devour the sun and the other the moon, possibly as a result of misinterpretation of *Grm.* 39 and *Vsp.* 39, where *tungl* might be interpreted as either sun or moon. That, at least, is how the present stanza is interpreted in *SnEGylf* (12, p. 14, and see note on pp. 60–61): 'There are two wolves, and the one that goes behind her [i.e. *sól*, the sun] is called *Sköll*. He panics her and he will take her, and the one who runs before her is called *Hati Hróðvitnisson*, and he wants to take the moon [*tunglit*], and that will come to pass'. *Hróðvitnir* 'Glory Wolf' is presumably equivalent to *Hróðrsvitnir*, a name

- for Fenrir in *Ls.* 39. Needless to say, when Hróð(s)vitnir catches the sun, he will devour it. Cf. *Vsp.* 39–40 and *Vm.* 46–47.
- 192 A primordial giant; see *Vsp.* 3.
- 193 I.e., blood.
- 194 Stt. 40 and 41 are quoted together in variant form in *SnEGylf* (8, p. 12), *SnEUpp* (10, p. 20). Cf. *Vm.* 21.
- 195 Or ‘eyelids’.
- 196 ‘Middle Enclosed Space’, the centrally positioned enclosure where humans live; sometimes, more specifically, the surrounding wall.
- 197 Presumably the fire torturing Grímnir.
- 198 According to *SnEGylf* (31, p. 26), Ullr is the fair son of Sif and the stepson of Þórr; he is an unrivalled archer and skier, whom duellists should pray to. Here in *Grm.*, however, *Ullr* might be an alias of Óðinn. From Book 3 of Saxo’s *GD* we learn that *Ollerus* (= *Ullr*) replaced Óðinn as chief god and was even given his name, but fled to Sweden on Óðinn’s reinstatement and was killed by the Danes. In places, the cult of Ullr may have been assimilated into that of Óðinn. In Anglo-Saxon texts, OE *Woden*, a cognate of ON Óðinn, is associated with OE *wuldr* ‘glory’, a word cognate with ON *Ullr*.
- 199 Literally ‘homes’.
- 200 Or ‘because open worlds will come to pass’.
- 201 Or ‘over’, ‘above’.
- 202 The ‘sons of the Æsir’ could be either the Æsir (gods) themselves or, perhaps more likely here, men.
- 203 The cauldrons presumably contain the torturing fires and were either suspended from the hall’s roof or raised on stands. The exact sense and significance of this stanza are unclear.
- 204 ‘(Ship) Assembled from Pieces of Thin Wood’.
- 205 *SnEGylf* (43, p. 36) and *SnESkáld* (I, 35, pp. 41–42) agree with *Grm.* 43–44 that Skíðblaðnir is the best ship, and that it was made for Freyr by the (unnamed) dwarven sons of an otherwise unknown person called *Ívaldi*, a name that could mean ‘Yew-(Bow)-Controlling One’ (= *Ullr*) or ‘Very Powerful One’. However, chapter 7 of *Ynglinga saga* assigns the ship to Óðinn, and *SnEUpp* (26, p. 62) says the dwarves gave it to Freyja.
- 206 This stanza is quoted in variant form in *SnESkáld* (I, 7, pp. 18–19).
- 207 Or ‘gods’.
- 208 *Sleipnir* ‘Sliding/Slippy One’ is Óðinn’s horse, which is elsewhere described as grey and eight-legged.
- 209 *Bilrøst* means ‘Momentary League’; *SnEGylf* (15, pp. 17–18) calls it *Bifrøst* ‘Shaking League’. It is the bridge between the worlds of humans and gods, which *SnEGylf* identifies as a rainbow; its red segment is fire, designed to repel the frost- and mountain-giants. All the gods ride over the bridge every day, except for Þórr, who wades; see *Grm.* 21, 29.
- 210 Bragi (cf. *brngr* ‘best’, ‘poetry’) is a god of poetry; he might be the apotheosis of the ninth-century skaldic poet Bragi Boddason the Old.
- 211 Nothing more is known of *Hábrók* ‘High Breeches’, though this hawk presumably had long legs.
- 212 *Garmr* ‘Howler’ appears prominently in *Vsp.*

- 213 The words *en Brimir sverða* ‘and Brimir of swords’ are found only in A and lack alliteration; they might originally have been a variant of *en Bragi skálða* ‘and Bragi of poets’ earlier in this stanza. Cf. *HH. II* 10, *Sd.* 14, according to which ‘He [Óðinn?] stood on a cliff with the edges of Brimir’, and *SnESkáld* (I, 75, p. 119), in which Brimir (or *brunr, brimarr*) ‘Flickerer(?)’ is a sword-name. Nothing more is known of this sword. This stanza is quoted in variant form in *SnEGylf* (41, p. 34; see also *SnEUpp* 25, p. 60), which says these are the words *sjálfra Ásanna* ‘of the Æsir themselves’.
- 214 ON *svipr* (dat. pl. *svipum*) means literally ‘swoop’, ‘swift movement’, but can also denote a ‘sudden loss’, a ‘glimpse (of someone)’, a ‘ fleeting appearance’, a ‘look’ and a ‘likeness’; here it seems likely to denote the temporary disguises of Óðinn’s cloak (now burned away?) and his alias, Grímnir. Óðinn may consider that his preceding disclosure of arcane knowledge has revealed his true identity. The verb *yppa* (past participle *ypt*), literally ‘to up’ can also mean ‘extol’ and ‘announce’, this last sense being used elsewhere to introduce a versified list of Óðinn’s aliases: *Nú skal yppa Óðins nafnum* ‘Now I shall announce Óðinn’s names’ (SPSMA III, 732).
- 215 ‘Sons of the victory gods’ could, like ‘sons of the Æsir’ in *Grm.* 42, refer to either gods or men (or both). This line is metrically anomalous in having double alliteration in its second half.
- 216 Or ‘a desired remedy/protection’, but *vil-* can also mean ‘bowels’, ‘self-will’ and ‘veil’. Yet another possibility is *vílbjörg* ‘misery/toil deliverance’. The precise nature of the *vílbjörg/vílbjörg* is obscure, but, judging from the following lines, it is at least partly suggestive of a refreshing drink.
- 217 Alternatively, ‘to’ or ‘from’.
- 218 Or ‘gods’.
- 219 *Ægir* ‘Sea’ is a sea-giant; for his feast, see *Hym.* 2, 39 and *Ls.*
- 220 ‘Masked One’.
- 221 Alternatively, ‘I called myself Grímr, I called myself Gangleri’. This is a list of aliases of Óðinn. *Gangleri* means ‘Walk-Weary One’.
- 222 ‘Army Leader’.
- 223 ‘Helmet Bearer’. Cf. *Sd.* 14. *SnEGylf* (51, p. 50) describes Óðinn as wearing a golden helmet at Ragnarok.
- 224 ‘Agreeable/Beloved One’ or ‘Perceptive One’.
- 225 ‘Third’. Why Óðinn bears this name is unclear, but ON *þriði* is cognate with *Trita*, the ancient Sanskrit name of a dragon-slaying deity associated with thunder and lightning (note Óðinn’s next alias, *Pundr*).
- 226 Possibly ‘Thunderous One’ or ‘Swollen One’.
- 227 Ostensibly at least, the Old Norse fem. noun *uðr* ‘wave’.
- 228 ‘Hel-Blind/Hidden One’.
- 229 ‘High One’ or ‘One-Eyed One’. *Grm.* 46–50 and 54 are repeated, albeit with considerable differences, in *SnEGylf* (20, pp. 21–22); see also *SnEUpp* (17, p. 36).
- 230 ‘True One’. This stanza continues the list of aliases of Óðinn.
- 231 ‘Changeable One’.
- 232 ‘Truth Getter/Guesser’.

- 233 'Army Happy One'.
- 234 'Instigator', 'Inciter'.
- 235 'Feeble-Eyed One' or 'One with Space for an Eye'.
- 236 'Flame-Eyed One'.
- 237 'Evil Doer', the alias Óðinn assumes when stealing the mead of poetry from the giants in *Háv.* 109 and *SnESkáld* (I, G58, p. 4).
- 238 'Very Wise One' or 'Hidden One/Concealer'.
- 239 This name has already appeared in the previous stanza.
- 240 'Masked One'.
- 241 'Seduction-Wise/Swift One'.
- 242 'Very Wise One'. Part of this stanza is quoted by Óláfr Þórðarson, Snorri Sturluson's nephew, in his *Third Grammatical Treatise* (c. 1250).
- 243 'Broad-Hatted One'. This stanza continues the list of aliases of Óðinn.
- 244 'Broad-Bearded One'.
- 245 'Victory Father'.
- 246 'Instigator', 'Inciter'.
- 247 'All Father'.
- 248 'Slaughter Father' or 'Father of the Slain'.
- 249 'Attacking Rider'.
- 250 'God of Cargoes', the 'cargoes' perhaps especially being hanged men.
- 251 Or 'peoples', 'men'.
- 252 'Gelding'. The name is repeated in *Grm.* 54.
- 253 We have no details of this episode and do not know the identity of Ásmundr 'God Hand/Protection'.
- 254 Possibly, 'Keeler', if this name is related to *kjølr* 'keel', *kjoll* 'keel', 'ship'. Alternatively, perhaps 'Feeder'.
- 255 Again, this episode is obscure, but it perhaps relates to a story of how Óðinn, disguised as *Forni* 'Old One', found a tree-trunk fit to make into the keel of the longship of King Óláfr Trygvasson; see Guðbrandr Vigfusson and C. R. Unger, *Flateyjarbok: en samling af norsk konge-sagaer*, 3 vols. (Christiania: Mallings, 1860–68), I, 433–34.
- 256 'Thriving/Fruitful One'.
- 257 Since *þrós þing* 'Prór's assembly' is a skaldic kenning for 'battle', the assemblies may be battles.
- 258 Possibly 'Feller', 'One Who Cuts Down'. Alternatively, it has been suggested that *Viðurr* is cognate with a south Scandinavian people called *Wederas* 'Weathers' or 'Wethers' (also *Weder-Geatas*) in the Old English poem *Beowulf*.
- 259 This line appears only in A.
- 260 Possibly 'Desired One' or 'Wish (Fulfiller)'.
- 261 Possibly 'Distantly Heard One' or 'Highest One'.
- 262 'Equally High One'.
- 263 Possibly 'One with Shaking Shield' or 'One with Painted Shield'.

- 264 This name probably relates to *Göndul*, the name of a valkyrie in *Vsp.* 30 and of some sort of supernatural animal; these terms appear related to *gandr*, a noun denoting some kind of spirit or magical wand (see *Vsp.* 22).
- 265 'Grey Beard', Óðinn's alias in *Hrbl.*
- 266 Possibly 'Spear-Wielder', though a connection with *Svíar* 'Swedes' is also conceivable.
- 267 'Stiller', 'Calmer'.
- 268 I.e., Sókkmímir's home.
- 269 Or 'when I became sole slayer of Miðviðnir, the eminent son'. This episode is otherwise unknown, but a giant called *Spkkmímir* 'Sunken/Treasure Mímir' is mentioned in chapter 12 of *Ynglinga saga*, and *Sekmímir* or *Sókmímir* appears in a list of giant-names in *SnESkáld* (I, 75, p. 111). *Miðviðnir* could mean 'Mid-Wood One' (i.e., 'Dweller Amid a Wood'), but A has *Miðvitnir*, which might mean 'Middle Wolf' or 'Fishing-Bank Wolf'.
- 270 Literally, 'you've overdrunk'.
- 271 *Mínu* 'my' has alliterative stress. In place of *gengi* 'following, company, support', A has *gæði*, which might be the noun *gæði* 'good will'.
- 272 Or maybe 'friends are dealing with you'. The precise sense is unclear, but the phrase could be proverbial.
- 273 Presumably an ironic reference to Geirroðr. *Míns* 'my' has alliterative stress.
- 274 I.e., 'corpse wearied by the edge of a sword'. Cf. *Hm.* 30.
- 275 *Yggr* 'Terrible/Frightening One' is an alias of Óðinn.
- 276 The *dísir* were female spirits or goddesses. Their precise nature is unclear, but they seem to have been associated with death, valkyries, the Nornir and Freyja.
- 277 *Mik* 'me' has alliterative stress.
- 278 Most unusually, the second half of this revelatory line has triple alliteration.
- 279 Or 'and I called myself Pundr before that'.
- 280 'Wakeful One'.
- 281 'Descendant of Skelfir', a legendary ancestor of the peoples known as Ynglingar and Skilfingar. *Skilfingr* is also a poetic term for 'prince' and 'sword'.
- 282 'Wavering/Dangling One', probably a reference to Óðinn's hanging on a windy tree (*Háv.* 138–49). It is also a poetic term for 'wind'.
- 283 Perhaps 'God of Hidden Things'; cf. *Hroptr* in *Grm.* 8.
- 284 'Gotlander', 'Goth' or 'Sacrifice'.
- 285 This name appeared earlier in *Grm.* 49.
- 286 These two are also names of snakes in *Grm.* 34.

Før Skírnis

Før Skírnis (*FSk.*) ‘Skírnir’s Journey’ is found in **R** (fol. 11r–12r). The initial prose and most of stt. 1 to 27—the rest having been lost—also appear in **A** (fol. 2r–v), under the title *Skírnismál* ‘The Sayings of Skírnir’. A variant version of the final stanza is quoted in *SnEGylf* (36, p. 31). Orthographical and palaeographical similarities to *Hrl.*, the next poem in **R** (but not **A**), suggest that the two poems were originally transcribed together and separate from the rest of **R**.

The date of composition is, as usual, uncertain. *FSk.* was once held to be one of the earliest surviving Eddic poems (tenth century or earlier), but some recent commentators favour a twelfth- or thirteenth-century date. Like other poems in this collection, however, even if *FSk.* reached its present form quite late, it may include much earlier material.

FSk. is mainly in *ljóðaháttir*, the usual Eddic metre for dialogue-poems; the extended form, *galdralag*, also features, especially in Skírnir’s curse (e.g., 29/4–7, 30/4–7, 32). There are, in addition, several half-stanzas in *fornyrðislag* (e.g., 34/1–4, 36/1–4). The poem’s extensive use of dialogue has led to the suggestion that it is based on, or intended for, dramatic performance.

This is the only poem in **R** to focus on the group of gods known as Vanir, and on the deity Freyr in particular. His union with the giantess Gerðr is mentioned elsewhere in Norse myth, however, where it constitutes a formal bond: *Hdl.* 30 records that Freyr married Gerðr, daughter of Gymir and Aurboða. Other texts also refer to this union: *Ls.* 42 states that Freyr ‘had Gymir’s daughter bought’ with gold and thus gave away his sword, and that consequently he will not know how to fight the sons of Muspell at Ragnarok; chapter 10 of *Ynglinga saga* says that ‘[Freyr’s] wife was called Gerðr, daughter of Gymir; their son was called Fjölnir’, progenitor of the Ynglingar dynasty.¹ These references suggest the former existence of other mythological material about Freyr and Gerðr.

Other than *FSk.*, the only surviving full account of the myth of Freyr and Gerðr appears in *SnEGylf* (37, pp. 30–32), but its romanticized and considerably shorter account is probably based largely on a version of *FSk.* Snorri’s prose narrative agrees in the main with that of the poem, but there are some significant differences: according to Snorri, Freyr’s love for Gerðr is a punishment for his presumption in sitting in Hliðskjálf; the giantess Skaði plays no part in events; more is made of Freyr’s desperate

¹ In addition, some scholars propose a link between small gold foils found in Sweden, which show a couple embracing, and the myth of Freyr and Gerðr.

love-sickness, in keeping with high-medieval notions of courtly love; Freyr, not his servant Skírnir, is the main figure; Gerðr accepts the proposed union at once, without gifts, violence or curses; and the story has explicit eschatological significance, because we learn that Freyr will miss his sword at Ragnarok.²

I have argued elsewhere that behind *FSk.* may lie a celestial myth about the transfer of light from sun to moon and back again, Gerðr arguably being (or having been), in my view, a lunar giantess who had acquired sunlight, which Skírnir, emissary of the sun-controlling god Freyr, seeks to reclaim for his master. This myth seems to be paralleled, albeit obscurely, in the confrontation of the eponymous hero of the Old English poem *Beowulf*, on behalf of Hroðgar, lord of the 'Friends of Ing [= (Ingvi) Freyr]' (i.e., Danes), with another hostile giantess, Grendel's mother.³ But *FSk.* is also interpretable simply as a bridal-quest tale of the subjugation of a giantess to a male god's sexual desire by means of gifts, physical violence (actual or threatened), rune-magic and cursing. Additionally, it shows the conflict of reason and passion in relations between gods and giants; they can, as a rule, live neither with nor without each other. On the one hand, the gods and giants are, despite their kinship, arch-enemies; on the other, they desire each other sexually. Hence, for example, Óðinn's seduction of Gunnloð in *Háv.* and of an unnamed giantess in *Hrbl.*; Pórr's fathering of Magni on the giantess Járnsaxa in *SnESkáld*; several giants' desire for Freyja, Sif and (perhaps) Iðunn in *Vsp.*, *Brk.*, *SnEGylf* and *SnESkáld*; and the giantess Skaði's wish to marry Baldr in *SnESkáld*. Similarly, Freyr wants Gerðr, and she, despite antipathy to a suitor she believes to be her brother's slayer, would rather have him than a giant.

Although lust between gods and giantesses is evident, when it comes to more formal ties the gods generally maintain an apartheid. Exceptions include the marriage of the Njörðr to Skaði in *SnEGylf*, and her subsequent marriage to Óðinn in *Ynglinga saga*. In *FSk.* it seems that the former marriage has yet to fail, but Freyr is nonetheless aware that his desire—judging from the marriage referred to in other texts—for more than a passing liaison with Gerðr is taboo: 'of Æsir and elves, no one will wish it, that we two should be united' (*FSk.* 7). Happily, his marriage was not only allowed but proved to be a unique intergroup success in Eddic mythology.

Indeed, the story of Freyr and Gerðr, or at least the putative basis thereof, has often been interpreted as a fertility myth. More specifically, it has been thought by some to manifest the Indo-European myth of a *hieros gamos* 'sacred marriage' or a mating between Sky and Earth.⁴ In *FSk.*, according to this interpretation, the virile sun-god Freyr—his messenger *Skírnir* 'Cleansing One' perhaps being a personified sunbeam—wins *Gerðr* '(She of the) Enclosed Place', who represents the unfertilized ground.

² Freyr's weaponless state is possibly alluded to earlier, in *Hál.* 7.

³ See E. Pettit, 'Freyr, Skírnir and Gerðr', in *The Waning Sword: Conversion Imagery and Celestial Myth in 'Beowulf'* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2020), pp. 171–96, <https://doi.org/10.11647/opb.0190.07>

⁴ Cf. *Hál.* 12.

Although this specific view differs somewhat from my reading of the poem, allusive mythic imagery can support more than one interpretation.

Despite its focus on one of the Vanir (a perspective shared in Eddic poetry only by *Hdl.*), *FSk.* also has similarities and links to its Eddic neighbours: for example, (1) the quest to giantland finds parallel in *Háv.*, *Vm.* and *Hym.*, and especially in the ironic reversal of the bridal quest in *Brk.* and perhaps *Alv.*; also in *Fj.*, which displays strong similarities to *FSk.* in terms of theme, scene and language; (2) the theme of love, or at least lust, between gods and giants echoes that touched on in *Vsp.*, *Háv.*, *Hrbl.* and *Brk.*, although Freyr's passivity contrasts with the active approach of the giants and Óðinn; (3) Gymir/Ægir's loss of his daughter is compounded by the loss of his prize cauldron in *Hym.*; (4) the potential confrontation with Gymir finds parallel in the hostile giants of *Háv.*, *Vm.*, *Hym.* and *Brk.*, and foreshadows the last battles of *Vsp.*; (5) notable verbal similarities exist with *Ls.*

FSk. also has close affinities with bridal-quest tales that became popular in the twelfth century and with curse-literature. The bridal-quest tales contain corresponding motifs, such as the worried parents, the wooer's love from afar, the well-protected virgin, the hostility of the bride's father to the wooing, and the difficulties overcome by the wooer's helper.

Synopsis

Prose: Freyr, one of the Vanir, had sat in Hliðskjálf (Óðinn's observation-seat). From there he saw a beautiful girl, for whom he suffered great sickness of heart. Freyr had a servant called Skírnir. Freyr's father, the god Njorðr, asked Skírnir to get Freyr to talk.

Verse: Njorðr's wife, the giantess Skaði, does the same, wondering with whom Freyr is so angry (1). Skírnir says he is likely to get a foul reply if he asks (2), but does so anyway (3).

Freyr asks why he should tell Skírnir his woes (4). Skírnir replies that they trusted each other in their youth (5). Freyr then reveals both his love for the girl he saw in the courts of the giant Gymir and his belief that none of the Æsir or elves will favour any union between them (6–7). Skírnir, having apparently decided to fetch the girl, requests Freyr's horse, so that he can pass the flames that protect her abode. He also asks for Freyr's sword, which fights giants of its own accord (8). Freyr agrees to give them to him (9). Skírnir tells the horse that it is time to set off. They gallop by night over misty mountains with the resolve either to achieve their quest or be captured by Gymir (10).

Skírnir arrives in giantland to find the hall of Gerð—the name of the giantess whom Freyr loves—protected by dogs and a fence. He greets a herdsman who is sitting on a mound (10 pr.), and asks how he can get past Gymir's dogs to talk to the girl (11). The herdsman says he never will (12). Skírnir intimates that rather than cry, he will try anyway (13).

Upon feeling the earth shake, Gerðr asks her servant-woman what the noise is (14). She informs Gerðr that there is a man outside (15). Gerðr tells her to invite him in for some mead, even though she fears that he slew her brother (16). She asks Skírnir who he is and why he has come through the flames to her house (17). His answer is cagey (18).

Skírnir begins his attempt to win Gerðr for Freyr by offering her eleven golden apples (or, arguably, some apples to cure old age) (19), an offer she refuses (20). He then offers her the magical ring which was burnt on Baldr's pyre (21), which she also refuses (22).

He threatens to behead her with his sword, unless she acquiesces (23). But she will not be coerced; if he is looking for a fight, her father, Gymir, will oblige (25). Skírnir says he will slay Gymir with the sword (25).

Skírnir strikes (or threatens to strike) her with a 'taming wand' and begins to list the torments she will suffer unless she gives in (26): isolation from men (26); a longing for Hel and loathing of food (27); being stared at by everyone and imprisoned behind bars (28); idiocy, howling, frustration and extreme lust (29); torture by trolls and a daily crawl to the frost-giants' hall (30); having only a three-headed giant to live with (31).

Skírnir says he went to a forest and got a 'tribute(?)-twig' from a sappy tree (32).

He declares that the gods are angry with her (33) and continues his curse: he bans her from men's love (34); consigns her to the giant Hrímgrímnir beneath corpse-gates, where, at the tree's roots, she will be given goats' piss to drink (35); he also carves runes of torment, but says he will remove them if she gives in (36).

At last, she grudgingly concedes (37), but Skírnir still insists on setting a date for her and Freyr to meet (38). She stipulates a grove called Barri in nine nights' time (39).

Skírnir rides home. Freyr is standing outside and immediately asks him how his mission went (39 pr., 40). Skírnir tells him the date and location of the meeting (41). Freyr exclaims that he does not think he can endure so long a wait (42).

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Fór Skírnis

Freyr, sonr Njarðar, hafði setzk í Hliðskjálf, ok sá um heima alla. Hann sá í Jötunheima ok sá þar mey fagra, þá er hon gekk frá skála fóður síns til skemmu. Þar af fekk hann hugsóttir miklar.

Skírnir hétt skósveinn Freys. Njörðr bað hann kveðja Frey mál.

Þá mælti Skaði:

1. 'Rístu nú, Skírnir, ok gakk at beiða
okkarn málá móg,
ok þess at fregna: hveim inn fróði sé
ofreiði afi!'

Skírnir kvað:

2. 'Illra orða er mér ón at ykkrum syni,
ef ek geng at mæla við móg,
ok þess at fregna: hveim inn fróði sé
ofreiði afi.'

3. 'Segðu þat, Freyr, fólkvaldi goða,
ok ek vilja vita:
hví þú einn sitr endlanga sali,
minn dróttinn, um daga?'

Freyr kvað:

4. 'Hví um segjak þér, seggr inn ungi,
mikinn móðtrega?
Þvíat álfroðull lýsir um alla daga,
ok þeygi at mínum munum.'

Skírnir kvað:

5. 'Muni þína hykka ek svá mikla vera,
at þú mér, seggr, né segir;
þvíat ungar saman várum í árdaga,
vel mættim tveir trúask.'

Freyr kvað:

6. 'Í Gymis góðum ek sá ganga
mér tíða mey;
armar lýstu, en af þaðan
allt lopt ok lógr.'

7. 'Mær er mér tíðari en manni hveim
ungum í árdaga;
Ása ok álfa, þat vill engi maðr,
at vit sátt sém.'

Skírnir's Journey

Freyr, son of Njörðr, had sat himself in Hliðskjálf, and he looked through all worlds.¹ He looked into Jötunheimar² and saw there a fair maiden as she walked from her father's hall to her bower.³ From this he received great sicknesses of heart.

Freyr's servant was called Skírnir.⁴ Njörðr asked him to get Freyr to talk.

Then Skaði said:⁵

1. 'Arise now, Skírnir, and go urge⁶
our boy to speak,
and ask him this: with whom the virile⁷ youth
is so very angry!'

Skírnir said:

2. 'Evil words I expect from your son,
if I go to speak with the boy,
and ask him this: with whom the virile youth
is so very angry.'

3. 'Tell me this, Freyr, folk-leader⁸ of gods,
which I want to know:
why do you sit alone, my lord,
in the long halls, for days?'

Freyr said:

4. 'Why should I tell you, young man,
my great mind-distress?
Because the elf-disc⁹ shines through all days,
and yet not to my delight.'

Skírnir said:

5. 'I don't think your desires are so great,
man, that you can't tell me;
for we were young together in early days,¹⁰
we two could trust each other well.'

Freyr said:

6. 'In Gymir's courts I saw walking a girl¹¹
for whom I long;
her arms gleamed, and from them
all the sky and sea.¹²

7. 'The girl is lovelier to me than
to any young man in ancient days;
of Æsir and elves, no one will wish it,
that we two should be united.'

Skírnir kvað:

8. 'Mar gefðu mér þá, þann er mik um myrkvan beri,
vísan vafrloga,
ok þat sverð er sjálft vegisk
við jötna ætt.'

Freyr kvað:

9. 'Mar ek þér þann gef er þik um myrkvan berr
vísan vafrloga,
ok þat sverð er sjálft mun vegask,
ef sá er horskr er hefir.'

Skírnir mælti við hestinn:

10. 'Myrkt er úti, mál kveð ek okkr fara
úrig fjöll yfir,
þyrja þjóð yfir;
báðir vit komumk, eða okkr báða tekr
sá inn ámátki jötunn!'

Skírnir reið í Jötunheima til Gymis garða. Þar váru hundar ólmir, ok bundnir fyrir skíðgarðs hliði, þess er um sal Gerðar var. Hann reið at þar er féhirðir sat á haugi ok kvaddi hann:

11. 'Segðu þat, hirðir, er þú á haugi sitr
ok varðar alla vega:
hvé ek at andspilli komumk ins unga mans,
fyr greyjum Gymis?'

Hirðir kvað:

12. 'Hvárt ertu feigr, eða ertu framgenginn?
Andspillis vanr þú skalt æ vera
góðrar meyjar Gymis!'

Skírnir kvað:

13. 'Kostir ru betri, heldr en at kløkkva sé,
hveim er fúss er fara;
einu dœgri mér var aldr um skapaðr
ok allt líf um lagit!'

Gerðr kvað:

14. 'Hvat er þat hlym hlymjá er ek *heyri* nú til
ossum rönum í?
Jörð bifask, en allir fyrir
skjálfa garðar Gymis!'

Skírnir said:

8. 'Then give me the horse, the one that can bear me through¹³ dark,
 discerning¹⁴ flicker-flame,
 and the sword which fights by itself
 against the family of giants.'

Freyr said:

9. 'I give you that horse which will bear you through dark,
 discerning, flicker-flame,
 and the sword which will fight by itself,
 if he who has it is wise.'

Skírnir said to the horse:

10. 'It's dark outside — time, I say, for us to journey
 over moist mountains,¹⁵
 to gallop over land;¹⁶
 we shall both achieve our aim, or that almighty giant¹⁷
 will take us both!'

Skírnir rode into Jötunheimar, to Gymir's courts. There were ferocious hounds, and they were bound in front of the gate in the wooden fence which was around Gerðr's hall. He rode to where a herdsman was sitting on a grave-mound and greeted him:

11. 'Tell [me] this,¹⁸ herdsman, as you sit on a grave-mound
 and watch all ways:
 how can I get to talk with the young girl,
 despite Gymir's dogs?'

The herdsman said:

12. 'Are you doomed, or are you already dead?¹⁹
 You shall always be wanting to speak with
 with the good maiden of Gymir!'

Skírnir said:

13. 'There are better choices than crying
 for anyone eager to go on;
 on²⁰ one day a span²¹ was shaped for me²²
 and all my life laid down!'

Gerðr said:

14. 'What's that din of dins which I hear now
 in our houses?
 The earth's shaking, and with it all
 Gymir's courts are quaking!'

Ambátt kvað:

15. 'Maðr er hér úti, stiginn af mars baki,
jó lætr til jarðar taka.'

Gerðr kvað:

16. 'Inn biðóu hann ganga í okkarn sal
ok drekka inn mæra mjøð,
þó ek hitt óumk, at hér úti sé
minn bróðurbani.

17. 'Hvat er þat álfa né Ása sona
né víssa Vana?
Hví þú einn um komt eikinn fúr yfir
ór salkynni at sjá?'

Skírnir kvað:

18. 'Emkat ek álfa, né Ása sona,
né víssa Vana,
þó ek einn um komk eikinn fúr yfir
yður salkynni at sjá.

19. 'Epli ellifu hér hefi ek, algullin,
þau mun ek þér, Gerðr, gefa,
frið at kaupa, at þú þér Frey kveðir
óleiðastan at lifa!'

Gerðr kvað:

20. 'Epli ellifu ek þigg aldregi
at mannskis munum,
né vit Freyr, meðan okkart fjor lifir,
byggjum bæði saman!'

Skírnir kvað:

21. 'Baug ek þér þá gef, þann er brendr var
með ungum Óðins syni;
átta eru jafnhöfgir er af drjúpa
ina níundu hverja nótt!'

Gerðr kvað:

22. 'Baug ek þikkak, þótt brendr sé
með ungum Óðins syni;
era mér gulls vant í góðum Gymis,
at deila fé fóður!'

- A servant woman said:
15. 'A man is outside here, dismounted from horseback,
he's letting his steed graze.'²³
- Gerðr said:
16. 'Ask him to come inside our hall
and to drink the famous mead,
although I fear that outside here may be
my brother's slayer.'²⁴
17. 'Who is it of the elves, if you are not of the Æsir's sons,
nor of the wise Vanir?
Why have you come alone over oaken fire²⁵
to see our household?'
- Skírnir said:
18. 'I am not of the elves, nor of the Æsir's sons,
nor of the wise Vanir,'²⁶
but I have come alone over oaken fire
to see your household.
19. 'Eleven apples I have here, all golden,'²⁷
these will I give you, Gerðr,
to buy your affection,²⁸ so that you may say that Freyr
is the least loathsome one alive!'
- Gerðr said:
20. 'Eleven apples I will never take,
for any man's wishes,
nor, while our life endures, shall Freyr and I
both dwell together!'²⁹
- Skírnir said:
21. 'Then I give you a ring, the one which was burnt
with Óðinn's young son,'³⁰
eight are the equally heavy ones that drip from it
every ninth night!'³¹
- Gerðr said:
22. 'I refuse the ring, even if it was burnt
with Óðinn's young son;
for me there is no want of gold in Gymir's courts,
to share my father's wealth!'

- Skírnir kvað:
23. 'Sér þú þenna mæki, mær, mjóvan, málfán,
er ek hefi í hendi hér?
Høfuð høggyva ek mun þér hálsi af,
nema þú mér sætt segir!'
- Gerðr kvað:
24. 'Ánauð þola ek vil aldregi
at mannskis munum;
þó ek hins get, ef it Gymir finnisk
vígs ótrauðir, at ykkr vega tíði!'
- Skírnir kvað:
25. 'Sér þú þenna mæki, mær, *mjóvan, málfán*,
er ek hefi í hendi hér?
Fyr þessum eggjum hnígr sá inn aldni jötunn,
verðr þinn feigr faðir!'
26. 'Tamsvendi ek þik drep, en ek þik temja mun,
mær, at mínum munum;
þar skaltu ganga er þik gumna synir
síðan æva sé!'
27. 'Ara þúfu á skaltu ár sitja,
horfa heimi ór, snugga Heljar til;
matr sé þér *meirr* leiðr en manna hveim
inn fráni ormr með firum!'
28. 'At undrsjónum þú verðir er þú út kømr!
Á þik Hrímnir hari, á þik hvatvetna stari;
Víðkunnari þú verðir en vørðr með goðum!
Gapiðu grindum frá!'
29. 'Tópi ok ópi, tjósull ok óþoli
vaxi þér tár með trega!
Seztu niðr, en ek mun segja þér
sváran súfbreka
ok tvennan trega!'
30. 'Tramar gneypa þik skulu gerstan dag
jótna góðum í;
til hrímpursa hallar þú skalt hverjan dag
kranga kosta laus,
kranga kosta von;
grát at gamni skaltu í gógn hafa
ok leiða með tárum trega!'

- Skírnir said:
23. 'Do you see this sword, girl, slender, sign-coloured,³²
which I have here in my hand?
I shall hew the head from your neck,
unless you pronounce a pact with me!'
- Gerðr said:
24. 'I will never submit to coercion
for any man's wishes;
but I think this, that if you and Gymir meet,
not slow to battle, you will both long to fight!'³³
- Skírnir said:
25. 'Do you see this sword, girl, slender, sign-coloured,
which I have here in my hand?
Before these edges that aged giant will sink,
your father is fated to die!'
26. 'With a taming wand I strike you,³⁴ and I will tame you,
girl, to my wishes;
you shall go where the sons of men
will never see you again!³⁵
27. 'On the eagle's hill you shall sit early,³⁶
gaze out from the world,³⁷ look longingly to Hel;
may food be more loathsome to you than the shining snake is
to any man among the living!'
28. 'May you be a wondrous sight when you come out!
May Hrímnir³⁸ ogle at you, may everyone stare at you!
May you be more widely known than the watchman among the gods!³⁹
Gape from the gates!⁴⁰
29. 'May idiocy and howling, frustration and unbearable lust
increase your tears with grief!
Sit down, and I shall tell you of a
heavy tormenting desire(?)⁴¹
and a twofold grief!'
30. 'Evil creatures will oppress you all day
in the giants' courts;
to the frost-giants' hall you shall every day
creep without choice,
creep in want of choice;
you shall have sobbing in exchange for pleasure,
and nurse sorrows with tears!'

31. 'Með þursi þríhfðuðum þú skalt æ nara,
 eða verlaus vera;
 þitt geð grípi,
 þik morn morni;
 ver þú sem þistill, sá er var þprunginn
 í qnn ofanverða!'
32. 'Til holts ek gekk ok til hrás viðar,
 gambantein at geta,
 gambantein ek gat!'
33. 'Reiðr er þér Óðinn, reiðr er þér Ásabragr,
 þik skal Freyr fjásk,
 in fyrinilla mær, en þú fengit hefir
 gambanreiði goða!'
34. 'Heyri jótnar, heyri hrímþursar,
 synir Suttunga, sjálfir Ásliðar,
 hvé ek fyrbýð, hvé ek fyrirbanna
 manna glaum mani,
 manna nyt mani!'
35. 'Hrímgrímnir heitir þurs er þik hafa skal
 fyr nágindr neðan;
 þar þér vílmegir á viðar rótum
 geita hland gefi!
 Œðri drykkju fá þú aldregi,
 mær, af þínum munum,
 mær, at mínum munum!'
36. 'Þurs ríst ek þér ok þrijá stafi:
 ergi ok ceði ok óþola;
 svá ek þat af ríst, sem ek þat á reist,
 ef góðask þarfars þess!'
- Gerðr kvað:*
37. 'Heill verðu nú heldr, sveinn, ok tak við hrímkálki
 fullum forns mjáðar!
 Þó hafða ek þat ætlað, at myndak aldregi
 unna Vaningja vel!'
- Skírnir kvað:*
38. 'Ørindi míð vil ek qll vita,
 áðr ek ríða heim heðan,
 nær þú á þingi munt inum þroska
 nenna Njarðar syni.'

31. 'With a three-headed giant you shall always dwell,
 or [else] be manless;
 may lust seize you,
 may longing waste you;
 be like a thistle, the one which was filled to bursting⁴²
 at the end of the harvest!
32. 'I went to a forest and to a sappy tree,
 a tribute(?)-twig⁴³ to get,
 a tribute(?)-twig I got!
33. 'Óðinn will be angry with you, Ásabragr⁴⁴ will be angry with you,
 Freyr shall loathe you,
 abominable girl, and you will have received
 the gods' tribute(?)-wrath!⁴⁵
34. 'Hear, giants, hear, frost-giants,
 sons of Suttungi,⁴⁶ you Æsir-hosts yourselves,
 how I forbid, how I ban
 happy talk with men from the girl,
 use of men⁴⁷ from the girl!
35. 'Hrímgrímnir⁴⁸ the giant is called who shall have you
 down below corpse-gates;⁴⁹
 there at the tree's roots⁵⁰ vile boys
 will give you goats' piss!
 Better drink you will never get,
 girl, by your wishes,
 girl, by my wishes!
36. 'I carve "giant"⁵¹ for you and three staves:
 "perversion" and "frenzy" and "unbearable lust";⁵²
 I will shave it⁵³ off, just as I carved it on,
 if reasons should arise for this!'⁵⁴
- Gerðr said:
37. 'Hail to you rather now, lad, and accept a frost-cup⁵⁵
 full of ancient mead!'⁵⁶
 Yet I'd thought that I would never
 love a Vaningi⁵⁷ well!'
- Skírnir said:
38. 'My whole errand I want to know⁵⁸
 before I ride home from here,
 [I want to know] when you, at a tryst, will submit to
 the mature son of Njörðr.'

Gerðr kvað:

39. 'Barri heitir, er vit bæði vitum,
lundr lognfara;
en ept nætr níu þar mun Njarðar syni
Gerðr unna gamans.'

Þá reið Skírnir heim. Freyr stóð úti ok kvaddi hann ok spurði tíðinda:

40. 'Segðu mér þat, Skírnir, áðr þú verpir sǫðli af mar
ok þú stígir feti framarr:
hvat þú árnaðir í Jötunheima,
þíns eða míns munar?'

Skírnir kvað:

41. 'Barri heitir, er vit báðir vitum,
lundr lognfara;
en ept nætr níu þar mun Njarðar syni
Gerðr unna gamans.'

Freyr kvað:

42. 'Löng er nótt, langar ru tvær,
hvé um þreyjak þrjár?
Opt mér mánaðr minni þótti
en sjá hálf hýnótt!'

Gerðr said:

39. 'It's called Barri,⁵⁹ which we both know,
a grove of the calm-weather traveller(?);⁶⁰
and there, after nine nights,⁶¹ Gerðr will give pleasure
to Njörðr's son.'⁶²

Then Skírnir rode home. Freyr was standing outside and greeted him and asked for news:

40. 'Tell me this, Skírnir, before you unsaddle the horse
and take one step further:
what did you achieve in Jötunheimar,
of your wish or mine?'

Skírnir said:

41. 'It's called Barri, which we both know,
a grove of the calm-weather traveller(?);
and there, after nine nights, Gerðr will give pleasure
to Njörðr's son.'⁶³

Freyr said:

42. 'Long is a night, long are two,
how can I last for three?⁶⁴
Often a month has seemed to me shorter
than this [one] half nuptial-night(?)!'⁶⁵

Textual Apparatus to *Før Skírnis*

Før Skírnis] Rubricated but faded in R; A *Skírnismál* ‘The Sayings/Lay of Skírnir’

Freyr] The first letter is large, half-inset and rubricated, but faded, in R

hafði] A *hafði æinn dag* ‘had one day’; cf. *SnEGylf* (37, p. 31) *Pat var einn dag* ‘It happened one day’

Speech directions (e.g., *Skírnir kvað* ‘Skírnir said’) are abbreviated in R and A, often in the outer margins; some are wholly or partly missing in R where the edges of pages have been cut away. Only those wholly or largely absent from both texts are italicized in this edition of *FSk*. Some italicized speech directions may never have been present in either text.

1/1 *Rístu*] A *Ris þv*

2/2 ón at *ykkrum*] A *vón af yðrum*

2/5–6 *hveim ... afí*] R abbreviates

3] R’s outer margin shows the remains of a (strictly superfluous) speech direction identifying Skírnir as the speaker of this stanza

3/1 *Segðu þat*] A *Sæg þv mær þat*

3/5 *endlanga*] so A; R *eNlanga*

5/2 *svá mikla*] A *mikla sva*

5/6 *tveir*] A absent

6/2 *ek sá*] A *sa æk*

6/5 *þaðan*] A *þæim* ‘them’

6/6 *logr*] A *lægir*

7/2 *manni*] so A; R *maN*

7/3 *ungum*] so A; R *avngom*

7/6 *sátt*] A *samt* ‘together’

8/1–2 *þá, þann er*] A *þaþan*

8/2 *um myrkvan*] A *of myrkan*

9/2 *um myrkvan*] A *of myrkan*

10/4 *þyrja*] A *þursa* ‘of giants’

10/5 *komumk*] A *komvmz*

10/7 *sá inn*] A *hinn*

10 pr. *skiðgarðs*] R *skiðgarði*; A *skiðgarz*

11/4 *andspilli*] so A; R *anspilli*

11/5 *komumk*] A *komvmz*

12/4 *andspillis*] so A; R *anspillis*

13/2 *heldr en at*] **A** *xenn*

14/2 *heyri*] so **A**; **R** *hlymia heyri*

14/2 *nú*] **A** absent

14/3 *rønum*] **A** *høllum* 'halls'

15/3] *lætr*] **A** *lætr hann*

16/4 *óumk*] **A** *ovmz*

17] **A** has a (strictly superfluous) speech direction identifying Gerðr as the speaker of this stanza

17/1–2 *álfa né Ása*] **A** *asa .æ. alfa*

17/3 *víssa*] so **A**; **R** *visa*

17/4 *um*] **A** absent

17/5 *eikinn fún yfir*] **A** *æk inn fyrir*

17/6 *ór*] **A** *var*

18] **A** absent

19] **A** speech direction in **A** identifies the speaker as Skírnir

19/3 *mun*] **A** *man*

19/6 *at*] **A** absent

20/3 *mannskis*] **A** *mannz ænkis*

20/4 *Freyr*] so **A**; **R** *Frey*

20/5 *okkart*] **A** *oKat*

20/6 *byggjum bæði*] **A** *byggvm bæð* 'share a bed'

21/6 *hverja*] **R** *hverio*

21/4–22/3] **A** absent

23/5 *ek mun*] **A** *mvn æk*

24/3 *mannskis*] **A** *manz ænskis*

24/4 *it*] **A** *þit*

25/1–3] Abbreviated in **R** and **A**

25/2] **R** omits in abbreviated passage; **A** abbreviates *m.*

26/6 *sé*] **A** *sía*

27/1–2] **A** *Ar scaltv sitia ara þvfu a*

27/3 *heimi ór*] so **R**, with *ór* added in the margin; **A** *ok*

27/5 *meirr*] so **A**; **R** absent

27/7 *firum*] The text of **A** ends with this word

31/3 *eða*] R *ep*

35/9 *at*] R *af*

39/4 *en*] R *eN / eN*

39/5 *Njarðar*] R *niarþa*

41/1–6] This stanza is heavily abbreviated in R

Notes to the Translation

- 1 Hliðskjálf is Óðinn's high-seat vantage point (see the start of *Grm.*).
- 2 'Giant Homes', the land of giants. According to *SnEGylf* (37, p. 31), Freyr looked *í norðrætt* 'in a northerly direction'.
- 3 Or perhaps 'to an outhouse', *skemma* denoting some sort of small building. By contrast, *SnEGylf* (37, p. 31) refers to a *mikit hús ok fagrt* 'large and beautiful building'.
- 4 'Cleansing/Shining One'. Skírnir is known only from this poem, the corresponding account in *SnEGylf*, and Óðinn's use of him as a messenger to some dwarves or black-elves in *SnEGylf* (34, p. 28). He may be a hypostasis of Freyr.
- 5 The giantess Skaði is Njörðr's wife. Her name is perhaps related to *Scandinavia*, ON *skaði* 'harm' and OE *sceadu* 'shadow'. It is unclear whether she is Freyr's mother or stepmother here; one tradition says that Njörðr sired Freyr on an unnamed sister. Either way, it appears that her word carries more weight with Skírnir than Njörðr's. She does not feature in the version of the story told in *SnEGylf*.
- 6 The Old Norse line lacks alliteration and is therefore presumably partly corrupt.
- 7 Or 'wise'.
- 8 Or 'host/army-leader'.
- 9 A term for the sun. It could also be a proper noun for the same, as in *Vm.* 47.
- 10 I.e., ancient days.
- 11 She is later identified as *Gerðr* '(She of the) Enclosed Place', daughter of the giant Gymir and, according to *Hdl.* 30 and *SnEGylf* (37, pp. 30–31), of the giantess Auðboða. The prose at the start of *Ls.* identifies *Gymir* as a by-name of the sea-giant Ægir.
- 12 I.e., the sky and sea shone with light from her arms. Some of the wording shows through in *SnEGylf* (37, p. 31): *þá lýsti af hondum hennar bæði i lopt ok á lög* 'then light shone from her arms both in the sky and on the sea'.
- 13 Or 'over'.
- 14 Perhaps because the fire knows whom to allow across. Alternatively, the sense might be 'well-known'.
- 15 Cf. *Hm.* 11.
- 16 A's variant *þursa þjóð yfir* means 'over giants' land' (literally, 'over the people of giants').
- 17 Presumably Gymir, Gerðr's father.
- 18 Literally, 'Say it!'
- 19 A full line may well be missing from this stanza at this point.
- 20 Or 'for'.

- 21 I.e., life-span.
- 22 Cf. *Vsp.* 20.
- 23 Skírnir has apparently negotiated both the flame and the fierce dogs. If there was once a second half to this stanza, it has been lost.
- 24 Gerðr's brother is unnamed but may have been a giant slain by Freyr's sword. Cf. *Ls.* 17 in which the goddess Iðunn, possibly connected with Gerðr through her possession of the gods' youth-restoring apples (see *FSk.* 19), embraces her *bróðurbani* 'brother's slayer'. Alternatively, it has been suggested that *bróðurbani* might here mean no more than 'mortal enemy'.
- 25 I.e., a fire fuelled by oak wood, which produces a strong and lasting flame.
- 26 Unless he is lying, Skírnir is apparently neither elf nor god. His nature is uncertain, but he might be a man; cf. Þórr's human servants Þjálfi and Röskva.
- 27 The number eleven (*ellifu*) may have been chosen simply for its vocalic alliteration but it might be relevant that, according to *Hdl.* 29, eleven Æsir are counted after Baldr's death, an event that, judging from *FSk.* 21, predates Skírnir's journey. Emendation of *epli ellifu* 'eleven apples' to *epli elliflyfs* 'apples of old-age-healing' would identify them as the gods' youth-restoring apples, otherwise kept by the goddess Iðunn.
- 28 The sense 'peace' may also be relevant.
- 29 A's variant version means 'nor will Freyr and I share a bed together'.
- 30 Baldr.
- 31 *SnEGylf* (49, p. 47) calls the ring *Draupnir* 'Dripper'. Óðinn placed it on Baldr's pyre, and *honum fylgði síðan sú náttúra at hina níunda hverja nóttr drupu af honum átta gullhringar jafnhogfir* 'it subsequently had the property that every ninth night eight gold rings of equal weight dripped from it'; note also the similar wording in *SnESkáld* (I, 35, p. 42), and Baldr's description as *eigandi ... Draupnis* 'owner ... of Draupnir' in *SnESkáld* (I, 5, p. 17). Later, Hermóðr returned the ring to Óðinn from Hel, at Baldr's request.
- 32 Either having a damascened pattern or being marked with colourful signs or runes. Cf. *Sg.* 4.
- 33 This stanza moves from *ljóðaháttir* to *fornyrðislag*.
- 34 Or perhaps 'I will strike you'.
- 35 This stanza begins Skírnir's long curse, which may continue a tradition of early Germanic maledictions and love-magic; a fourteenth-century spell inscribed in runes on a stick found in Bergen, Norway, uses some of the same threats.
- 36 Or 'on the hill of eagles'; it could also be a proper noun (cf. Arasteinn in *HH. I* 14, *HH. I* 13 pr.).
- 37 I.e., the world of the living.
- 38 'Rime-Covered One', a giant.
- 39 Heimdallr, who watches for the giants' arrival at Ragnarok.
- 40 Presumably the barred gates that keep Gerðr captive.
- 41 The validity and meaning of the manuscript reading *sísbreka*, here translated 'tormenting desire', are uncertain. Possibly emend to *sútbreka* 'sea of sorrow'.
- 42 I.e., bursting with seeds. Alternatively, translate 'the one that was crushed'. The meaning of the last two lines of this stanza is disputed.

- 43 Possibly the ‘taming wand’ that Skírnir mentioned in st. 26. In chapter 16 of *The Waning Sword*, I venture a solar/lunar interpretation of this obscure twig, the *gamban-* ‘tribute(?)’ (cf. OE *gambe*, *-an* ‘tribute’) arguably being originally the light owed by the moon (possibly represented by Gerðr) to the sun-controlling Freyr/Skrnir. Otherwise, perhaps understand *gambanteinn* as ‘twig worthy of tribute’ or ‘mighty twig’. Cf. *Hrbl.* 20.
- 44 ‘Æsir’s Foremost’, probably Þórr.
- 45 Here perhaps ‘wrath about the (withheld) tribute’, ‘wrath worthy of tribute’ or ‘great wrath’.
- 46 Giants. Suttungi is presumably the giant now better known as Suttungr, who once owned the mead of poetry.
- 47 I.e., sexually.
- 48 ‘Frost-Masked One’. Nothing more is known of this giant.
- 49 Or perhaps ‘Corpse-Gates’.
- 50 Probably the roots of Yggdrasill, the world-tree; cf. *Háv.* 138, *HHv.* 17.
- 51 I.e., the rune *þ*, the Old Norse name for which is *purs* ‘giant’. The *Old Icelandic Rune-Poem* says ‘*þ* is torment of women’ and the *Norwegian Rune-Poem* that ‘*þ* causes sickness of women’—both probably refer to menstruation or labour.
- 52 Skírnir carves a runic inscription, the precise nature of which is unclear.
- 53 I.e., the inscription.
- 54 If Gerðr capitulates, Skírnir will remove the runes by scraping them off the wood on which they were carved.
- 55 Either a cup made of frosted glass or a cup covered with frost.
- 56 Gerðr’s serving of the mead-cup may amount to a formal offer of marriage.
- 57 ‘Descendent of the Vanir’. In *SnEskáld* (I, 75, p. 132) *vanningi* is a poetic term for ‘(castrated) boar’, an animal sacred to Freyr, so a veiled insult is possible.
- 58 I.e., ‘I want to know that my whole errand has been achieved’.
- 59 If *Barri* derives from *barr* ‘pine needle’, it might have phallic connotations. Alternatively, derivation from *barr* ‘barley’ is a possibility. *SnEGylf* (36, p. 31) calls the place *Bar(r)ey* ‘Barley Isle(?)’, which some scholars identify as the Isle of *Barra*, formerly *Barrey*, in the Scottish Hebrides. A meadow called *Beri* ‘Barley Isle(?)’, ‘Pasture Isle(?)’ appears in an English source, the thirteenth-century *Abingdon Chronicle*, as a destination in a ritual, probably derived from pagan fertility-myth, reportedly practised by tenth-century monks of the abbey of Abingdon.
- 60 ON *lognfara*, unattested outside *FSk.*, might mean ‘(of the) calm-weather traveller’ (*logn* ‘calm weather’, ‘lack of wind’ and *-fari* ‘farer’). It might be a term for Freyr, whose ship Skíðblaðnir always got a fair wind. Alternatively, perhaps translate ‘be calmed’.
- 61 Nine appears to have been something of a ‘perfect’ number in Germanic tradition. In Indo-European tradition more generally, a period of ‘nine nights’—essentially a third of a sidereal month—is often one of suffering leading to transformation or fulfillment; cf. e.g. *Háv.* 138.
- 62 The traditional period of chastity after a wedding was three days.
- 63 Skírnir quotes Gerðr’s earlier words to him.
- 64 Cf. Gg. 4.

- 65 Gerðr had perhaps scheduled her meeting with Freyr for nine nights after her encounter with Skírnir because she knew how long it would take those two to travel the distances involved. Possibly it would take Skírnir six nights to ride home the challenging way he had come—past flickering flame, across wet mountains and over land—which would leave Freyr three nights to reach Barri. Possibly she also appreciated that her stipulation would impose the traditional three nights of abstinence on Freyr. The ‘half nuptial-night’ that Freyr mentions would be the first of those three, it being ‘half’, which suggests incompleteness, perhaps because his wife (his ‘other half’) was elsewhere. *SnEGylf* (36, p. 31) quotes a variant of this stanza. Cf. *Brk.* 26, 28.

Hárbarðsljóð

Hárbarðsljóð (*Hrbl.*) ‘The Song of Hárbarðr’ survives in **R** (fol. 12r–13v). Stt. 19 (partially) to 60 also occur at the start of **A** (fol. 1r–v), where they precede *BDr*. The acephalous nature of the **A** version aside, the two texts of *Hrbl.* are substantially the same. Both manuscripts indicate the speakers from st. 20 onwards; **R** also does so in stt. 1, 2, 11 and 19. Orthographical and palaeographical similarities to *FSk.*, the preceding poem in **R**, suggest that these two poems were originally transcribed together and separate from the rest of **R**.

As usual for poems in this collection, *Hrbl.*’s date of composition is uncertain. Snorri Sturluson neither names nor quotes from *Hrbl.* in his *Prose Edda*, though *SnEGylf* might contain an echo of st. 13. If it does, the poem probably existed in some form before about 1225.

What might be a comic inversion of the events of *Hrbl.* appears in chapter 59 of an Old Norse translation of a lost, late-twelfth-century Latin account, by an Icelandic monk called Oddr Snorrason, of the life of Óláfr Tryggvason, king of Norway in the late tenth century.¹ In it a man—obviously the god Pórr, though his name is not given—calls out for passage on Óláfr’s ship. He gets this immediately, boards the ship, and proceeds to address the king’s men with *mörg hæðilic orð* ‘many scornful/ludicrous words’ and to provide fine entertainment. He laughs at them, and they at him, and utters many boasts. In particular, he claims to know a lot and that they will be unable to ask him anything he does not know. He then reveals that he once made the land safe for people by killing the last-remaining giantesses—all two of them, the other giants having died suddenly. After that he dives into the sea and disappears.

Additionally, a clue that might push the compositional date of a version of *Hrbl.* back hundreds of years to heathen times appears in chapter 102 of the thirteenth-century *Brennu-Njáls saga* ‘Saga of Burnt-Njáll’. It contains a skaldic verse, attributed to the Icelander Úlfr Uggason, concerning events in Iceland around 998, which seems to allude to a testing confrontation between Hárbarðr and Pórr across the strait of a fjord.² If Úlfr did compose this verse, it indicates that a tradition dealing with the same subject matter treated in *Hrbl.* existed in the late tenth century.

¹ Óláfs saga Trygvassonar, in Guðni Jónsson, ed., *Konunga sögur I* (Reykjavík, 1957), https://heimskringla.no/wiki/%C3%93l%C3%A1fs_saga_Tryggvasonar; T. M. Andersson, trans., *The Saga of Olaf Tryggvason. Oddr Snorrason* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, ed., *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, Íslensk fornrit 12 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1954), p. 263.

Hrbl. displays a variety of metres (*málaháttir/fornyrðislag*, *ljóðaháttir* and *galdralag*), which, together with considerable alliterative irregularity and prose passages, prompted some early scholars to suspect substantial textual corruption and interpolation. Modern scholarship, however, rejects their attempts to reconstruct a supposed ‘original’ form of the poem.

The surviving text could well be a two-person dialogue intended for dramatic performance. If so, the initial prose was perhaps not to be spoken, but read by the ‘actors’ in preparation for a performance.

Hrbl.’s position within **R** appears significant. By focusing on both Óðinn and Þórr, it forms a thematic bridge between a series of four poems that feature Óðinn prominently (*Vsp.*, *Háv.*, *Vm.* and *Grm.*) and a series of three poems that feature Þórr prominently (*Hym.*, *Ls.* and *Brk.*), the intervening *FSk.* notwithstanding.

Among these poems, *Hrbl.*’s closest thematic similarities are with *Ls.*³ The latter poem is a disputation between the trickster-god Loki and the other gods, including a similarly dim-witted Þórr. In both poems, Þórr is mocked for having hidden in a giant’s glove (*Hrbl.* 26, *Ls.* 60), using some identical wording. In both, too, it is alleged that Þórr’s wife has a lover (*Hrbl.* 48, *Ls.* 54). These similarities might indicate a direct relationship between the two poems. Most of their formal similarities, however, stem from a shared generic heritage. Both belong to a genre of poetic invective, known in English as a ‘flyting’, in which two men—rarely more, and seldom women—exchange insults, boasts, accusations and challenges to each other’s honour. The most recognizable instances, by virtue of their titles, are by sixteenth-century Scots poets, notably William Dunbar’s ‘The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedie’ and Alexander Montgomerie’s ‘Polwart and Montgomerie Flyting’.

The art of stylized provocation in verse, however, dates back thousands of years in serious works of heroic literature. It is evident, for example, in the Homeric epics of ancient Greece and in Old English verse. Old English poetry preserves, for instance, a flyting between the Dane Unferð and the hero of *Beowulf* (ll. 499–606); there are also the verbal exchanges between ealdorman Byrhtnoð and a viking messenger in the *Battle of Maldon*; and a suggestive description of a drunkard’s boasting and sniping in *Vainglory*. Middle High German verse provides, in Aventiure 25 of the *Niebelungenlied*, an exchange between the travelling hero Hagen and a haughty ferryman who refuses to transport strangers.

Most numerous and important for *Hrbl.*, though, are the other Old Norse instances. They include, in addition to *Ls.*, passages in the three Helgi-poems in **R**.⁴ *HH. I* (32–44) describes an exchange of accusations of unnatural behaviour between a ship’s

³ It is also noteworthy, however, that *Hrbl.* and *FSk.* are the only surviving texts to mention a *gambanteinn* ‘tribute(?)-twig’, in stt. 20 and 32, respectively.

⁴ On these, see J. Harris, ‘Eddic Poetry as Oral Poetry: The Evidence of Parallel Passages in the Helgi Poems for Questions of Composition and Performance’, in R. J. Glendinning and Haraldur Bessason, ed., *Edda: A Collection of Essays* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1983), pp. 210–42 at 218–24.

watchman and the land-based warrior Guðmundr, a less-charged version of which appears in *HH. II* (24–29 [19–24]). *HHv.* (12–30) contains a flyting between the ship-based warrior Atli and the land-based giantess Hrímerðr, again with a distinctly sexual slant.

Old Norse has two words that describe apparently different types of flyting: *senna* (cf. ON *sannr* ‘truth’) and *mannjafnaðr* ‘man-comparison’. Scholars, however, have struggled to agree which features, if any, distinguish one type from the other. As a result, they have variously classified *Hrbl.* as a *senna*, a *mannjafnaðr*, both a *senna* (st. 1–14) and a *mannjafnaðr* (st. 15–46), and as a member of a joint *senna-mannjafnaðr* flyting genre. What no one disputes, however, is that the two types are closely related. And two of the most important studies of *Hrbl.* agree, albeit in different ways, that the poem draws on both types.⁵

As Carol Clover has shown, *Hrbl.* displays a wealth of similarities to other Germanic flytings, of whichever type. When analysed collectively, they reveal the basic conventions of early Germanic verse invective—conventions which must be understood for an informed reading of *Hrbl.* (and *Ls.*). The typical features of a Germanic flyting are:

- A stereotyped setting, often a drinking-feast in a hall or a stretch of water across which a travelling hero and an argumentative ‘coastguard’ rail at each other.
- An initial greeting or provocation, and an exchange of words in which each speaker seeks to identify the other.
- A stylized, turn-by-turn disputation comprising claims, accusations, defences and counterclaims. These are couched in strongly boasting, self-inflating, insulting, dismissive or strategically concessive terms, with much use of repetition, parallel syntax, and a marked contrast between ‘I’ and ‘you’. Threats, curses and vows are common.
- Content that, bound by socio-literary tradition, pits the praiseworthy ‘hard life’ of fighting, travelling and adventuring against the scorned ‘soft life’ of domesticity, cowardice, sexual dalliance and perversity, and that scorns beggarly appearance and crimes against kin. Thus circumscribed, each disputant strives to be the more eloquent in either raising himself above his opponent or in putting him down.
- An assumption of a basic level of truthfulness by the disputants. Therefore, any exaggerations or lies—which in *Hrbl.* might include many of Hárbarðr’s otherwise unsubstantiated claims—must be plausible.

5 C. J. Clover, ‘Hárbarðsljóð as Generic Farce’, *SS* 51 (1979), 124–45; M. Bax and T. Padmos, ‘Two Types of Verbal Dueling in Old Icelandic: The Interactional Structure of the *Senna* and the *Mannjafnaðr* in Hárbarðsljóð’, *SS* 55 (1983), 149–74.

- An ending without physical violence, although violence may soon follow. In *Hrbl.*, as in *HH. I* 44 (cf. *Beowulf* ll. 588–89), the flying ends with the loser being wished an evil end.

For Clover, *Hrbl.* parodies the flying genre by combining faithful adherence to convention in its choice of scene, and in Þórr's technique and subject matter, with winning subversion from Hárbarðr. However, not everyone is convinced that *Hrbl.* is a fully fledged parody. One scholar proposes that 'the *senna* is a romantic-comic form that contains the seeds of self-reflexive farce'.⁶

Hrbl.'s characterization is largely paralleled elsewhere in Norse literature. Its depiction of Þórr accords broadly with that found in, for example, *Hym.* and *Prk.* Þórr is portrayed as a down-to-earth, hot-tempered, slow-witted fighter who prides himself on his stupendous martial exploits against giants in defence of humankind and gods. His dealings with the giants Hrungnir, Þjazi and Fjalarr, but not Svárangr's sons, are known from other sources. Their mention might be enough to compensate for Þórr's unimaginatively orthodox verbal delivery and win him most flytings, but he fails to realize that Óðinn is playing by new rules invented specially to confound him.

Unlike in *Hym.* and *Prk.*, Þórr does not win in *Hrbl.* He is denied passage across the sound, does not get to fight, and appears slow-witted beside Hárbarðr, by whom he is variously bemused, intrigued and enraged. All Þórr is left with at the end is a long walk home and his honour as a fighting man. Thus, *Hrbl.*'s humour has more bite than that of *Hym.* and *Prk.*; it exposes Þórr's intellectual limitations and shows how verbal skill and quick wits can negate physical strength.

Óðinn (Hárbarðr), although also a warrior, is altogether more mysterious, as in texts like *Háv.*, *Grm.* and *Vm.* As in those poems, he adopts a pseudonym and a disguise. His appearance as a ferryman is paralleled in chapter 212 of the fourteenth-century *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* 'The Greatest Saga of Ólafr Tryggvason', where he appears as a *nøkkva maðr* 'man of boats',⁷ and in the prologue to *Grm.*, where he gets a ship for Agnarr and Geirrðr. Most similar is his appearance in *Sf.* as a *karl* 'old man' who offers to ferry the hero Sigmundr, who is carrying his dead son Sinfjötli, across a fjord, but who, having taken the body on board, leaves Sigmundr on the shore and tells him to walk around the fjord (cf. chapter 10 of *VS*). Here, in transporting the dead but not the living, Óðinn resembles the aged and abusive ferryman Charon, psychopomp of Greek myth. The Óðinn-aliases *Farmaguð* and *Farmatýr* 'God of Cargoes' may partly reflect this role, not just Óðinn's function as god of the hanged, the 'cargo' of the gallows. His 'ownership' of noblemen who fall in battle (*Hrbl.* 24) is well-known from other sources.

6 J. Harris, 'Eddic Poetry', in C. J. Clover and J. Lindow, ed., *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 68–156 at 82.

7 Ólafur Halldórsson, ed., *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1958–61), II, 132–34.

Pórr's usual tormentor in Old Norse myth is Loki, with whom Hárbarðr has often been compared (and sometimes identified) by scholars. But antagonism between Óðinn and Pórr is also found in the long version of *Gautreks saga* 'The Saga of Gautrekr', and it might explain Óðinn's likely betrothal of Pórr's foster-daughter(?) to a dwarf in *Alv*. In chapter 7 of *Gautreks saga*, which is partly based on a late-twelfth-century(?) poem in *fornyrðislag*, Pórr and Óðinn—or rather Óðinn's human avatar—take it in turns to bestow curses and blessings on Starkaðr, a follower of Óðinn.⁸ Pórr bestows the curses, Óðinn's stand-in counters with the blessings, and part of their exchange recalls the contrast in *Hrbl.* 24 between Óðinn as god of nobles and Pórr as god of commoners. Whereas in *Hrbl.*, however, Óðinn clearly has the upper hand over Pórr, who is characterized as a one-dimensional giant-killer, in the saga the antagonists appear equally matched.

Synopsis

Prose: The god Pórr arrives at a sound on his way back from the east and calls to a ferryman on the other side.

Verse: He asks for the identity of the ferryman, whom he calls the 'boy of boys' (1). The ferryman replies by asking for the identity of Pórr, whom he calls the 'old man of old men' (2).

Pórr offers him food in return for passage (3). The ferryman mocks Pórr's lack of foresight, telling him that his mother is dead (4). Pórr says this news will grieve everyone greatly (5). The ferryman insults Pórr's impoverished appearance (6). Pórr asks him to steer the ferry over to him and enquires who owns it (7). The ferryman says a shrewd warrior called Hildólfr owns it, who told him to transport only good men and people he recognized. The ferryman again asks Pórr's name (8).

Pórr identifies himself proudly and again asks for the ferryman's name (9). The ferryman says that he seldom hides his name and declares himself to be Hárbarðr (one of the god Óðinn's many aliases) (10). Pórr asks why Hárbarðr would ever hide his name, unless he were involved in a feud (11). Hárbarðr replies that, regardless, he would defend his life against a man like Pórr (12).

Now thoroughly angry, Pórr declares that he would reward Hárbarðr for his insolence if he could get over the sound (13). Hárbarðr is happy to wait for him, and likens himself to Hrungnir, Pórr's giant adversary (14). Pórr declares that he defeated Hrungnir and asks what Hárbarðr was doing at that time (15). He says he was with a certain Fjolvarr on an island called Algren for five years, where they killed warriors and tried out the women (16).

Pórr asks how they got on with the women (17). Hárbarðr says they pleased them and that he outwitted and slept with them all. He enquires what Pórr was doing then

8 FSN, III, 31–38.

(18). Pórr says he was slaying the giant Þjazi and making stars out of his eyes. He asks what Hárbarðr was doing then (19). Hárbarðr says he was using love-spells against supernatural women and driving the giant Hlébarðr mad with a certain twig (20). Pórr points out the injustice of this (22), but Hárbarðr replies that one must take what one can. He asks what Pórr was doing then (22).

Pórr says he was fighting giants in the east in defence of the inhabitants of Miðgarðr. He asks what Hárbarðr was doing then (23). Hárbarðr says he was starting wars in Valland. He also declares that Óðinn owns the noblemen who die in battle, whereas Pórr owns the slaves (24).

Pórr declares that his adversary would divide forces unequally among the gods, if he had the power (25). Hárbarðr charges Pórr with cowardice when he spent the night in a giant's glove (26). Pórr calls Hárbarðr a pervert and threatens to kill him, if he could only reach him (27). Hárbarðr asks why he should do that, when their quarrel is so slight (28).

Pórr asks what Hárbarðr was doing while he was fighting the sons of Svárangr (29). Hárbarðr says he was sleeping with a woman in the east (30). Pórr observes that Hárbarðr must have had fun there (31). Hárbarðr says he could have done with Pórr's help to hold her (32). Pórr says he would have given it, if he could (33). Hárbarðr adds he would have trusted him, unless he proved treacherous (34). Pórr indicates that he would not have betrayed him (35). Hárbarðr asks what Pórr was doing then (36).

Pórr says he was fighting berserks' wives on Hlésey (37). Hárbarðr calls it shameful to fight women (38). Pórr claims they were more 'she-wolves' than women and adds that they destroyed his ship, threatened him and chased his servant Þjálfir. He asks what Hárbarðr was doing then (39).

Hárbarðr says he was in the army that prepared for war there (40). Pórr replies that Hárbarðr wants to speak about when he offered the gods harsh terms (41). Hárbarðr offers Pórr a ring in compensation (42). Taking umbrage for some reason, Pórr asks where he learnt such offensive words (43). 'From those old people who live in the forests of home', says Hárbarðr (44). Pórr says Hárbarðr is flattering the stones of cairns with that description (45). Hárbarðr says that is how he thinks of them (46).

Pórr again threatens to kill Hárbarðr (47), who then declares that Pórr's wife, Sif, has a lover at home, whom he would be better off attacking (48). Pórr thinks Hárbarðr is lying (49). Hárbarðr denies this and observes what a slow traveller Pórr is (50). Pórr says that it is Hárbarðr who has delayed him (51). Hárbarðr retorts that he never thought a herdsman would delay the god Pórr (52).

An exasperated Pórr again challenges Hárbarðr to row the boat over to him (53), but Hárbarðr tells him to clear off (54). Pórr asks Hárbarðr to tell him the way home (55). Hárbarðr gives him vague, mocking directions (56). Pórr asks whether he will get there today (57). Hárbarðr says he will, with difficulty (58). Pórr promises to pay Hárbarðr back for his mockery, if they meet again (59). Hárbarðr bids him be off to where monsters may get him (60).

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Hárbarðsljóð

Þórr fór ór austrvegi ok kom at sundi einu. Qðrum megum sundsins var ferjukarlinn með skipit.

Pórr kallaði:

1. 'Hverr er sá sveinn sveina er stendr fyr sundit handan?'

Hann svaraði:

2. 'Hverr er sá karl karla er kallar um váginn?'

Pórr kvað:

3. 'Ferðu mik um sundit, fœði ek þík á morgun!
Meis hefi ek á baki, verðra matrinn betri;
át ek í hvíld, áðr ek heiman fór,
síldr ok hafra, saðr em ek enn þess!'

Ferjukarlinn kvað:

4. 'Árligum verkum hrósar þú verðinum,
veiztattu fyrir górla:
dópr eru þín heimkynni, dauð hygg ek at þín móðir sé!'

Pórr kvað:

5. 'Þat segir þú nú er hverjum þíkkir
mest at vita, at míni móðir dauð sé.'

Ferjukarlinn kvað:

6. 'Peygi er sem þú þrjú bú góð eigr;
berbeinn þú stendr ok hefir brautninga gervi,
þatki at þú hafir brœkr þínar!'

Pórr kvað:

7. 'Stýrðu hingat eikjunni! Ek mun þér stóðna kenna,
eða hverr á skipit er þú heldr við landit?'

Ferjukarlinn kvað:

8. 'Hildólfr sá heitir er mik halda bað,
rekkr inn ráðsvinni er býr í Ráðseyjarsundi;
baðat hann hlennimenn flytja eða hrossa þjófa,
góða eina ok þá er ek gerva kunna;
segðu til nafns þíns, ef þú vill um sundit fara!'

Pórr kvað:

9. 'Segja mun ek til nafns míns, þótt ek sekr sják,
ok til alls øðlis: ek em Óðins sonr,
Meila bróðir en Magna faðir,
þrúðvaldr goða — við Pór knáttu hér dœma!
Hins vil ek nú spryra, hvat þú heitir.'

The Song of Hárbærðr

Pórr travelled from the east-way¹ and came to a sound. On the other side of the sound was the ferryman with the boat.²

Pórr called out:

1. 'Who's that boy of boys³ who stands on the other side of the sound?'

He replied:

2. 'Who's that old man of old men who shouts across the strait?'⁴

Pórr said:

3. 'Ferry me over the sound, I'll feed you in the morning!⁵
I've a basket on my back, the food couldn't be better;
I ate at leisure, before I left home,⁶
herrings and he-goats⁷ — I'm still stuffed with it!'

The ferryman said:

4. 'You boast of early deeds at breakfast,⁸
you don't fully understand what lies ahead:
your household's downcast, I think your mother's dead!'⁹

Pórr said:

5. 'Now you're saying that which will seem to everyone
most distressing, that my mother is dead.'

The ferryman said:

6. 'It's not as if you own three good farms;¹⁰
you stand barelegged and have a beggar's garb —
you don't even have your breeches!'¹¹

Pórr said:

7. 'Steer the little ferryboat over here! I'll show you the landing-place —
and who owns the ship which you keep by the shore?'

The ferryman said:

8. 'Hildólfr¹² he's called, who asked me to keep it,
the counsel-shrewd warrior who lives in Ráðseyjarsund;¹³
he told me not to ferry robbers or rustlers of horses,
only good men and those whom I know well;
state your name, if you want to travel across the sound!'¹⁴

Pórr said:

9. 'I would tell my name, even if I were outlawed,
and all my lineage, too: I am Óðinn's son,
Meili's¹⁵ brother and Magni's¹⁶ father,
strong-ruler of gods — it's Pórr you're speaking to here!
Now I want to ask this, what you are called.'

Ferjukarlinn kvað:

10. 'Hárbarðr ek heiti, hylk um nafn sjaldan!'

Pórr kvað:

11. 'Hvat skaltu of nafn hylja, nema þú sakar eigir?'

Hárbarðr kvað:

12. 'En þótt ek sakar eiga, þá mun ek forða fjørvi mínu
fyr slíkum sem þú ert, nema ek feigr sé!'

Pórr kvað:

13. 'Harm ljótan mér þíkkir í því,
at vaða um váginn til þín ok væta ogur minn!
Skylda ek launa kogursveini þínúm
kanginyrði, ef ek komumk yfir sundit!'

Hárbarðr kvað:

14. 'Hér mun ek standa ok þín heðan bíða;
fanntaðu mann inn harðara at Hrungni dauðan!'

Pórr kvað:

15. 'Hins viltu nú geta, er vit Hrungnir deildum,
sá inn stórúðgi jötunn, er ór steini var hoftuðit á;
þó lét ek hann falla ok fyrir hnígá!'

Hvat vanntu þá meðan, Hárbarðr?'

Hárbarðr kvað:

16. 'Var ek með Fjölvاري fimm vetr alla,
í ey þeiri er Algrœn heitir;
vega vér þar knáttum ok val fella,
margs at freista, mans at kosta!'

Pórr kvað:

17. 'Hversu snúnuðu yðr konur yðrar?'

Hárbarðr kvað:

18. 'Sparkar áttu vér konur, ef oss at spökum yrði,
horskar áttu vér konur, ef oss hollar væri;
þær ór sandi síma undu
ok ór dali djúpum
grund um grófu;
varð ek þeim einn öllum efri at ráðum,
hvílda ek hjá þeim systrum sjau,
ok hafða ek geð þeira allt ok gaman!'

10. The ferryman said:
 'I'm called Hárbarðr, I seldom hide my name!'¹⁷
11. Þórr said:
 'Why should you hide your name, unless you have disputes?'
12. Hárbarðr said:
 'But even if I have disputes, I'd defend my life
 before such a one as you are, unless I were doomed!'¹⁸
13. Þórr said:
 'A horrible shame it seems to me in this respect,
 to wade over the bay to you and wet my burden(?)'¹⁹
 'I'd pay you back for your insolent words,
 you swaddling-clothed(?) brat,²⁰ if I could get over the sound!'²¹
14. Hárbarðr said:
 'Here I'll stand and here I'll await you;
 you've not found a harder man since Hrungnir's death!'²²
15. Þórr said:
 'Now you want to talk of the time when Hrungnir and I had dealings,
 that stout-hearted giant whose head was made of stone;
 even so, I made him fall and sink before me!
- What were you doing meanwhile, Hárbarðr?'²³
16. Hárbarðr said:
 'I was with Fjolvarr all of five years,
 on the island which is called Algrœn;
 we fought there and felled warriors,
 tested many things, tried out the girls!'²⁴
17. Þórr said:
 'How did it turn out with your women?'
18. Hárbarðr said:
 'We had sparky women, if they submitted to us,'²⁵
 we had knowing women, if they were nice to us;²⁶
 out of sand they plaited ropes
 and out of a deep dale
 they dug the ground;
 I alone became superior to them²⁷ all by scheming,
 I slept beside those seven sisters,
 and I had all their lust and love-play!²⁸

Hvat vanntu þá meðan, Þórr?

Þórr kvað:

19. 'Ek drap Þjaza, inn þruðmóðga jötun,
upp ek varp augum Allvalda sonar
á þann inn heiða himin;
þau eru merki mest minna verka,
þau er allir menn síðan um sé!

Hvat vanntu meðan, Hárbarðr?

Hárbarðr kvað:

20. 'Miklar manvélar ek hafða við myrkriður,
þá er ek vélta þær frá verum!
Harðan jötun ek hugða Hlébarð vera;
gaf hann mér gambantein,
en ek vélta hann ór viti!

Þórr kvað:

21. 'Illum huga launaðir þú þá góðar gjafar.'

Hárbarðr kvað:

22. 'Þat hefir eik er af annarri skefr,
um sik er hverr í slíku!

Hvat vanntu meðan, Þórr?

Þórr kvað:

23. 'Ek var austr ok jötna barðak,
brúðir bólvisar er til bjargs gengu;
mikil myndi ætt jötna ef allir lifði —
vætr myndi manna undir Miðgarði!

Hvat vanntu meðan, Hárbarðr?

Hárbarðr kvað:

24. 'Var ek á Vallandi ok vígum fylgðak,
atta ek jöfrum, en aldri sættak;
Óðinn á jarla, þá er í val falla,
en Þórr á þræla kyn!'

Þórr kvað:

25. 'Ójafnt skipta er þú myndir með Ásum liði,
ef þú ættir vilgi mikils vald!'

What were you doing meanwhile, Þórr?'

Þórr said:

19. 'I slew Þjazi, the strong-minded giant,²⁹
I threw the eyes of Allvaldi's son³⁰ up
 into the shining sky;³¹
they are the greatest signs of my deeds,
 those which all people since may see!

What were you doing meanwhile, Hárbarðr?'

Hárbarðr said:

20. 'Mighty girl-wiles³² I had for mirk-riders,³³
 when I lured them away from men!³⁴
A hard giant I thought Hlébarðr³⁵ to be;
 he gave me a tribute(?)-twig,³⁶
 and I wangled him out of his wits!³⁷

Þórr said:

21. 'With ill-will you repaid good gifts, then.'

Hárbarðr said:

22. '[One] oak has what's scraped from another;³⁸
 it's everyone for himself in such things!

What were you doing meanwhile, Þórr?'

Þórr said:

23. 'I was in the east and I fought giants,
brides skilled in mischief who went to a mountain;³⁹
the kindred of giants would be large if all had lived —
 there would be no men under Miðgarðr!⁴⁰

What were you doing meanwhile, Hárbarðr?'

Hárbarðr said:

24. 'I was in Valland⁴¹ and I followed⁴² battles;
I incited princes, and I never made peace;⁴³
Óðinn owns the earls, those who fall in battle,
 but Þórr owns the kindred of thralls!'⁴⁴

Þórr said:

25. 'You'd divide people unequally among the Æsir,
 if you possessed very much power!'⁴⁵

Hárbarðr kvað:

26. 'Þórr á afl cerit, en ekki hjarta;
 af hræzlu ok hugbleyði þér var í hanzka troðit,
 ok þöttiska þú þá Þórr vera;
 hvárki þú þá þorðir fyr hræzlu þinni
 hnjosá né físa svá at Fjalarr heyrði!'

Þórr kvað:

27. 'Hárbarðr inn ragi, ek mynda þik í Hel drepa,
 ef ek mætta seilask um sund!'

Hárbarðr kvað:

28. 'Hvat skyldir þú um sund seilask, er sakir ru alls öngar?

Hvat vanntu þá, Þórr?'

Þórr kvað:

29. 'Ek var austr ok ána varðak,
 þá er mik sóttu þeir Svárangs synir;
 grjóti þeir mik børðu, gagni urðu þeir þó lítt fegnir,
 þó urðu þeir mik fyrri friðar at biðja!'

Hvat vanntu þá meðan, Harbárðr?'

Hárbarðr kvað:

30. 'Ek var austr ok við einhverja dœmðak,
 lék ek við ina línhvítu ok launþing háðak,
 gladdak ina gullbjörtru, gamni mær unði!'

Þórr kvað:

31. 'Góð áttu þér mankynni þar þá!'

Hárbarðr kvað:

32. 'Liðs þíns væra ek þá þurfi, Þórr,
 at ek helda þeiri inni línhvítu mey!'

Þórr kvað:

33. 'Ek mynda þér þá þat veita, ef ek viðr of kœmisk!'

Hárbarðr kvað:

34. 'Ek mynda þér þá trúá, nema þú mik í tryggð véltil!'

Þórr kvað:

35. 'Emkat ek sá hælbitr sem húðskór forn á vár!'

Hárbarðr said:

26. 'Þórr has sufficient strength, but no heart;
out of dread and cowardice you squeezed into a glove,
and you didn't seem to be Þórr then,⁴⁶
because of your dread you then dared neither
sneeze nor fart so that Fjalarr heard!'⁴⁷

Þórr said:

27. 'Hárbarðr, you pervert, I'd strike you into Hel,⁴⁸
if I could stretch across the sound!'

Hárbarðr said:

28. 'Why should you stretch across the sound, when our disputes are all as none?

What were you doing then, Þórr?'⁴⁹

Þórr said:

29. 'I was in the east and I defended the river
when Svárangr's sons assaulted me,⁵⁰
they pelted me with rocks, but took little pleasure in the victory,⁵¹
they first had to beg me for peace!'

What were you doing then, meanwhile, Hárbarðr?'

Hárbarðr said:

30. 'I was in the east and I spoke to some woman,⁵²
I played with the linen-white lady and had secret liaisons,⁵³
I gladdened the gold-bright woman, the girl gave me pleasure!'

Þórr said:

31. 'You had good dealings with the girl there, then!'⁵⁴

Hárbarðr said:

32. 'I'd have needed your help then, Þórr,
so that I might hold the linen-white maid!'

Þórr said:

33. 'I'd have granted it to you then, if I'd been able!'

Hárbarðr said:

34. 'I'd have trusted you then, unless you betrayed me!'

Þórr said:

35. 'I'm not such a heel-biter as an old hide shoe in spring!'⁵⁵

- Hárbarðr kvað:
36. 'Hvat vanntu meðan, Þórr?'
- Þórr kvað:
37. 'Brúðir berserkja barðak í Hléseyju;
þær hofðu verst unnit, vélta þjóð alla!'
- Hárbarðr kvað:
38. 'Klæki vanntu þá, Þórr, er þú á konum barðir!'
- Þórr kvað:
39. 'Vargynjur váru þær, en varla konur;
skeldu skip mitt, er ek skorðat hafðak,
oegðu mér járnþurki, en eltu Þjálfa!'
- Hvat vanntu meðan, Hárbarðr?'
- Hárbarðr kvað:
40. 'Ek vark í hernum er hingat gørðisk
gnæfa gunnfana, geir at rjóða!'
- Þórr kvað:
41. 'Þess viltu nú geta, er þú fórt oss óljúfan at bjóða!'
- Hárbarðr kvað:
42. 'Boeta skal þér þat þá mundu baugi,
sem jafnendr unnu, þeir er okkr vilja sætta!'
- Þórr kvað:
43. 'Hvar namtu þessi in hnœfilið orð,
er ek heyrða aldregi hnœfiliðri?'
- Hárbarðr kvað:
44. 'Nam ek at mōnum þeim inum aldrœnum er búa í heimis skógum!'
- Þórr kvað:
45. 'Þó gefr þú gott nafn dysjum er þú kallar þat heimis skóga!'
- Hárbarðr kvað:
46. 'Svá dœmi ek um slíkt far!'
- Þórr kvað:
47. 'Orðkringi þín mun þér illa koma,
ef ek ræð á vág at vaða;
úlfí hæra hygg ek at þú cepa munir,
ef þú hlýtr af hamri høgg!'

36. Hárbarðr said:
'What were you doing meanwhile, Þórr?'

37. Þórr said:
'I was fighting brides of berserks⁵⁶ on Hlésey;⁵⁷
they'd done the worst things, deceived all humankind.'

38. Hárbarðr said:
‘You did a shameful thing then, Pórr, when you fought with women!’

39. Þórr said:
'They were she-wolves, and scarcely women;
they smashed my ship, which I'd shored up,
threatened me with iron clubs, and chased Þjálfi!⁵⁹

What were you doing meanwhile, Hárbarðr?’

40. Hárbarðr said:
'I was in the army which⁶⁰ made ready here
to raise the battle-standard, to redder the spear!'⁶¹

- Pórr said:
41. 'Now you want to talk about this, when you went to offer us unpleasant terms!'⁶²

42. Hárbarðr said:
'I shall compensate you for that, then, with an arm-ring,⁶³
just as the arbiters awarded, those who want to reconcile us!'⁶⁴

43. Bórr said:
'Where did you learn these offensive words,
than which I've never heard more offensive!'

44. Hárbarðr said:
'I learnt them from those old people who live in the forests of home!'⁶⁵

- ⁶⁵ Pórr said:

46. Hárbarðr said:
‘That’s how I think of such things!’

47. Pórr said:
'Your glibness will serve you badly,
if I decide to wade across the bay;
louder than a wolf I think you'll howl,
if you take a hit from my hammer!'

Hárbarðr kvað:

48. 'Sif á hó heima, hans mundu fund vilja;
þann muntu þrek drýgja, þat er þér skyldara!'

Þórr kvað:

49. 'Mælir þú at munns ráði, svá at mér skyldi verst þíkkja;
halr inn hugblauði, hygg ek at þú ljúgir!'

Hárbarðr kvað:

50. 'Satt hygg ek mik segja, seinn ertu at fór þinni;
langt myndir þú nú kominn, Þórr, ef þú litum færir!'

Þórr kvað:

51. 'Hárbarðr inn ragi, heldr hefir þú nú mik dvalðan!'

Hárbarðr kvað:

52. 'Ása-Þórs hugða ek aldregi mundu
glepja féhirði farar!'

Þórr kvað:

53. 'Ráð mun ek þér nú ráða: ró þú hingat bátinum!
Hættum hœtingi — hittu fôður Magna!'

Hárbarðr kvað:

54. 'Farðu firr sundi! Pér skal fars synja!'

Þórr kvað:

55. 'Vísa þú mér nú leiðina, allz þú vill mik eigi um váginn ferja!'

Hárbarðr kvað:

56. 'Lítit er synja, langt er at fara:
stund er til stokksins, qnnur til steinsins,
haltu svá til vinstra vegsins unz þú hittir Verland;
þar mun Fjörgyn hitta Þór, son sinn,
ok mun hon kenna honum áttunga brautir til Óðins landa!'

Þórr kvað:

57. 'Mun ek taka þangat í dag?'

Hárbarðr kvað:

58. 'Taka við víl ok erfiði at uppverandi sólu,
er ek get þána!'

Hárbarðr said:

48. ‘Sif has a lover at home,⁶⁸ him you’ll want to meet;
you’ll use your might on him, that’s more urgent for you!’

Þórr said:

49. ‘You’re shooting your mouth off,⁶⁹ so that it should seem worst to me;
you gutless man, I think you’re lying!’

Hárbarðr said:

50. ‘I think I speak true, you’re slow on your journey;
you’d have come a long way by now, Þórr, if you’d travelled with oars(?)!⁷⁰

Þórr said:

51. ‘Hárbarðr, you pervert, it’s rather you who’s delayed me now!’

Hárbarðr said:

52. ‘I never thought a herdsman⁷¹ would
thwart the travels of Ása-Þórr!⁷²

Þórr said:

53. ‘I’ll tell you what to do now: row the boat over here!
Let’s stop bickering — meet Magni’s father!’

Hárbarðr said:

54. ‘Clear off from the sound! Passage shall be refused you!’

Þórr said:

55. ‘Show me the way now, since you won’t ferry me over the bay!’

Hárbarðr said:

56. ‘It’s a little thing to refuse, [but] it’s a long way to go:
it’s one stretch to the stump, another to the stone,
then take the left-hand road until you reach Verland,⁷³
there Fjörgyn will find Þórr, her son,
and she will show him the kinsmen’s ways to Óðinn’s lands!⁷⁴

Þórr said:

57. ‘Will I get there today?’

Hárbarðr said:

58. ‘You’ll get there with toil and trouble while the sun’s up,⁷⁵
as I think it will thaw!’

Þórr kvað:

59. 'Skammt mun nú mál okkat vera, allz þú mér skœtingu einni svarar;
launa mun ek þér farsynjun, ef vit finnumk í sinn annat!'

Hárbarðr kvað:

60. 'Farðu nú, þars þik hafi allan gramir!'

Þórr said:

59. ‘Short will be our talk now, since you answer me only with scorn;
I’ll pay you back for refusing me passage, if we meet another time!’

Hárbarðr said:

60. ‘Go now, to where fierce ones⁷⁶ may have you whole!’⁷⁷

Textual Apparatus to *Harbarðsljóð*

Harbarðsljóð] The rubricated title of this poem is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of **R**; this edition therefore relies on the transcription therein

Speech directions are not always present in the **R** text, but are always found in what remains of the **A** text; those found, in whole or part, in neither text are italicized in this edition of *Hrbl.*

Pórr] The first letter is large, red (but faded) and inset in **R**

2 *svaraði]* **R** abbreviated *s.*

6/2 *gōð eigir]* **R** *eigir goð*, but with indication that the words should be transposed

12/1 *þótt]* **R** *þot*

15/7 *vantv]* **R** *vantv*

15/7 *Hvat ... meðan]* Subsequent instances of these words are variously abbreviated in **R**

18/12 *gaman]* **R** *gamaN*

19/7 *minna]* The fragmentary **A** text begins with this word

19/8 *síðan um]* **A** of

20/5 *ek hugða]* **A** *hugða æk*

21/1 *þá]* **A** absent

21/1 *gjafar]* **A** *gjafir*

24/6–7 *þá er ... kyn]* So **A** and **R**, but in **R** only after scribal correction from *eN þor þa er i Val falla. A þræla kyn*

25/2 *Ásum]* **A** *asa*

26/1 *ærít]* **A** *yrit*

26/4 *þér var]* **A** *var þær*

26/5 *þóttiska þú]* **A** *þottizkattv*

26/8 *hnjósa né físa]* **A** *físa næ hniosa*

27/3 *um sund]* **A** of *svndit*

28/1 *skyldir þú]* **A** *scaltv vm*

28/2] *sakir ru]* **A** *sakar ærv*

29/3–4 *mik sóttu þeir]* **A** *þær sottv mik*

29/4 *Svárangs]* **A** *svarangrs*

29/6–7 *þó lítt fegnir; þó]* **A** *litt fægnir þo*

29/9 *þá]* **A** absent

30/2 *einhverja]* **R** *ein hveria; A einhæriv*

30/3 *línhvítu]* so **A**; **R** *lindhvito* ‘shield-white’, but cf. *Hrbl.* 32 *línhvítu*

- 30/4 *launþing*] so **A**; **R** *laung þing* 'long meetings'
- 30/5 *gladdak ina gullbiortu*] **A** *gladda aec hina gvllhvítv*
- 31/1 *þér*] **R** *þr* (with sign of abbreviation above the *r*); **A** *þr*
- 31/1 *mankynni*] **A** *mannkynni*
- 32/2 *væra*] **A** *var*
- 33/1 *þá þat*] **A** *þat þa*
- 33/2 *viðr*] **A** *við*
- 33/2 *kæmisk*] **A** *kæmvmz*
- 37/2 *barðak*] **A** *barða aec*
- 37/2 *Hlésey*] **A** *hlæs æy*
- 37/4 *vélta*] **A** *villta*
- 38/1 *vanntu*] **R** and **A** *vantv*
- 39/1 *váru þær*] **A** *þat vorv*
- 39/4 *hafðak*] **A** *hafða*
- 39/5 *ægðu mér*] **A** *ægða mær aec þæim* (with *mær* interlined and *þæim* underdotted for deletion)
- 40/1 *vark*] **A** *var*
- 41/1 *óljúfan*] **A** *olifyfan*, **R** *olubaN*
- 42/1 *þat þá*] **A** absent
- 42/4 *sætta*] **A** *sætt hafa*
- 43/3 *aldregi*] **A** *alldri*
- 43/4 *hnæfeligri*] **A** *hin hnæfeligri*
- 44/1 *monnum*] **A** omits at the end of the page
- 44/1 *skógum*] **A** *skavgvom*
- 45/1 *þat*] **A** absent
- 46/1 *um*] **A** absent
- 47/5 *hygg ek at þú æpa munir*] **A** *hygg aec þik æpa mvno*
- 48/2 *mundu*] **A** *mvntv*
- 48/4 *skyldara*] **A** *skylldra*
- 50/1 *mik*] **A** *þic*
- 50/3 *langt*] **R** *langt la*, with *la* underdotted for deletion
- 50/3 *Pórr*] **A** absent
- 51/2 *dvalðan*] **A** *dvalit*
- 52/1 *Ása-Pórs*] **A** *asa þor*

52/2 *hugða ek*] A æk hvgða

53/3 *hætingi*] R hættingi, A hætingi

54 *firr*] A fra

55/1 *nú*] A absent

55/2 *eigi um*] A nv æigi of

56/1 *synja*] A at synia

56/3 *stokksins*] A stoks

56/4 *til steinsins*] A ær til stæins

56/5 *vegsins*] A vægs

56/6 *Verland*] A valland

56/7 *mun*] A man

57/1 *pangat*] R heþangat, with the letters *he* underdotted for deletion

57/1 í *dag*] A a dægi

58/1 *ok*] A ok við

58/2 *uppperandi*] A vpp rænnandi

58/3 *pána*] A þa na

59/1 *vera*] A absent

59/2 *allz ... svarar*] A ær þv vill skætingv æinni svara

60/1 *allan*] A allir

Notes to the Translation

- 1 I.e., from *Jötunheim(a)r* ‘Giant Home(s)’, the lands in the east where he slays giants. Cf. *Ls.* initial prose.
- 2 The ferryman is Óðinn. His identity is half-revealed in *Hrbl.* 10, but, if the poem were dramatized, may have been more apparent to those watching.
- 3 A superlative; cf. *Hdl.* 1, *Gðr.* 1.
- 4 Þórr perhaps used *sveinn* ‘boy, young man’ in the technical sense ‘servant with a particular function’, *sveinn sveina* amounting to a superlative ‘best of servants’. But the ferryman takes this address as an insult to his age and status. Hence the ferryman’s barbed rejoinder: ON *karl* denotes an old man of low status. The irony of this exchange is not just that Þórr fails to recognize his father or that the two gods misdescribe each other’s ages, but that each describes the other in terms more appropriate to himself, Þórr sometimes being likened to a young man or boy in Norse myths, and Óðinn often appearing as an old man (*karl*).
- 5 This statement might indicate that night is approaching. Cf. *Hrbl.* 58.
- 6 According to the initial prose, Þórr is returning from the enemy territory of *Jötunheim(a)r*, so perhaps he ate enough for a round-trip before setting out from home. Cf. *Ls.* note to initial prose, *Ls.* 55, *Hym.* 15, *þrk.* 24.

- 7 Or ‘and porridge’. Þórr often travels in a chariot drawn by billy-goats. In *SnEGylf* (44, p. 37) he eats his goats for supper, before resurrecting them by consecrating their bones with his hammer. It might be this rite that Óðinn refers to as Þórr’s ‘early deeds’ in the next stanza.
- 8 The implication may be that a true hero would be thinking of fame, not his stomach.
- 9 Þórr’s mother is a giantess called *Jörð* ‘Earth’ or, as in *Hrbl.* 56, *Fjörgyn* ‘Earth/Mountain’. The ferryman probably alludes to the water ahead—solid earth is no more. He might also allude to winter, when the earth seems dead and many of its inhabitants (‘Þórr’s household?’) are dejected; cf. the imminent thaw mentioned in *Hrbl.* 58.
- 10 An insult, as Þórr was a god of farmers and especially popular in Iceland.
- 11 Cf. *Alv.* 5.
- 12 *SnEskáld* (I, 75, p. 113) names *Hildólfir* ‘Battle-Wolf’ immediately after Þórr as one of Óðinn’s sons.
- 13 ‘Counsel-Island Sound’; the name is otherwise unknown but appropriate for the site of a battle of wits.
- 14 This request is, of course, merely part of Óðinn’s act. He would have recognized Þórr instantly.
- 15 Meili is another of Óðinn’s sons. He is also named in *SnEskáld* (I, 75, p. 113) and in *Haust.* 4, 14.
- 16 *Magni* ‘Strong One’ is known for his eventual possession, along with his brother Móði, of Þórr’s hammer (*Vm.* 51); also for the story in *SnEskáld* (I, 17, p. 22) of how, aged only three, he alone was strong enough to lift the giant Hrungnir’s leg from the neck of his prostrate father.
- 17 Ironically, *Hárbarðr* ‘Grey Beard’ is an alias of Óðinn, who habitually conceals his identity. In *Grm.* 49 it is one of his names ‘among the gods’.
- 18 The second and third verses of this stanza should perhaps be reversed for alliteration.
- 19 The meaning of *þogur(r)* is uncertain here; perhaps ‘testicles’, ‘balls’.
- 20 Cf. *SnEGylf* (45, p. 39), where the giant Skrýmir warns Þórr and his companions that the giant Útgarða-Loki’s men will not tolerate *þvílkum kögursveinum kópuryrði* ‘cheek from babies like you’. The meaning of *kögur-* in *kögursveinn* is uncertain (perhaps ‘swaddling cloth’), but the compound is evidently a derogatory term for a small man.
- 21 It is curious that, despite his rage, Þórr does not simply wade across the sound here or in *Hrbl.* 47. By contrast, he wades rivers daily in *Grm.* 29 and crosses the rivers called Élivágar in *SnEskáld* (I, 17, p. 22); furthermore, the account in *SnEGylf* (48, pp. 44–45) of how his feet touched the seabed when he was fishing suggests that he ought easily to have waded across a sound. On the other hand, *SnEskáld* (I, 18, p. 25) records that he got into severe difficulty when wading the river Vimur, which was being swollen by the urine or menstrual blood of a giantess.
- 22 Þórr’s slaying of the stone-headed giant Hrungnir is described in *SnEskáld* (I, 17, pp. 20–24), according to which he only narrowly survived.
- 23 Challenge questions are conventional in Norse flytings.
- 24 The events in this stanza are otherwise unknown, as are *Fjolvarr* ‘Very Wary’ and *Algren* ‘All Green’. The former might, however, be a giant, the male counterpart of a giantess called *Fjolvyr*. If so, Óðinn’s fighting beside a giant would be unique among surviving myths and perhaps calculated to anger the giant-killer Þórr.

- 25 Literally, 'if they became compliant [or 'wise'] to us'.
- 26 This stanza appears intentionally obscure, and partly nonsensical, in order to puzzle Þórr.
- 27 I.e., 'overcame them'. Sexual innuendo is possible.
- 28 This myth is otherwise unknown and the identity of the seven sisters is unclear. Óðinn might have invented it, and them, though he is famous for sneaky liaisons with women and giantesses.
- 29 *Haust.* and *SnEskáld* (I, G56, pp. 1–2) record how the giant Þjazi kidnapped the goddess Iðunn, but was eventually killed by the gods. Neither account attributes the killing to Þórr alone; note also *Ls.* 50.
- 30 Þjazi. His father *Allvaldi* 'All Ruler' is called *Qlvaldi* 'Ale Ruler' in *SnEskáld* (I, 56, p. 3).
- 31 In *SnEskáld* (I, 56, p. 2) it is Óðinn who throws Þjazi's eyes into the sky, making them into stars as part of a compensation package for Skaði, the giant's daughter. It is unclear who does this in a verse from the early skaldic composition *Ragnarsdrápa* 'Ragnarr's Poem', quoted in *SnEskáld* (I, 23, p. 34 and p. 180 n.). Cf. *SnEskáld* (I, 17, p. 22), where Þórr throws one of Aurvandill's toes into the sky and makes it a star.
- 32 I.e., cunning ways to seduce young women.
- 33 Witches. Cf. *kveldriða* 'evening rider', a term used of wolf-riding witches and those who brutally 'ride' men in the evening.
- 34 Perhaps 'their men'. This event is otherwise unknown.
- 35 *Hlébarðr* 'Leopard' or 'Lee Beard' is otherwise unknown.
- 36 Cf. *FSk.* 32 and note thereto. If the 'tribute(?)-twig' is here a metaphor for a sunbeam, its touch perhaps inflicted sunstroke on the giant.
- 37 Chapter 7 of *Ynglinga saga* reports that Óðinn knew how to take away men's *vit* 'wits'.
- 38 Sense uncertain, but probably proverbial. Perhaps understand 'One oak keeps its bark, when another has its scraped off', or, in other words, 'Some win, some lose—that's life!' Men are often described metaphorically as trees in skaldic poetry.
- 39 Or 'rock', 'cliff'. Giantesses, like their menfolk, live in rocks. Þórr's killing of them is celebrated in a skaldic verse in *SnEskáld* (I, 4, p. 17), which also recounts his slaying of the daughters of the giant Geirrðr (18, pp. 24–30). Þórr kills an old giantess in *Prk.* 32. He also claims to have killed two giantesses in chapter 59 of the Icelandic translation of Oddr Snorrason's late-twelfth-century account of the life of Óláfr Tryggvason.
- 40 *Miðgarðr* 'Middle Yard/Enclosed Space', often a term for the world of humans, seems here to refer to a protective wall surrounding that world.
- 41 Either Gaul or a fictional 'Land of the Slain (*valr*)'.
- 42 Or 'pursued'.
- 43 For Óðinn's incitement of discord, cf. *HH. II* 34.
- 44 Other sources record that Óðinn's valkyries pick the best noblemen who die in battle. They become the *einherjar*, the 'unique/only champions' who will fight beside him at Ragnarok. Þórr is usually associated with free farmers, rather than slaves, so this claim looks like another insult.
- 45 The interpretation of this line is uncertain. An alternative might be 'if you possessed as much power as you want'.
- 46 Or 'and you didn't think yourself Þórr then'.

- 47 According to *SnEGylf* (45, pp. 37–38), Pórr and his companions once mistook a wide opening for the entrance to a building in which to spend the night. At midnight they heard thunderous noises, felt the ground shake and sought shelter further inside. His companions were afraid, but Pórr grasped his hammer, ready to defend himself. In the morning he realized his mistake—their lodging had been the thumb of a giant’s glove, and the noises and earthquake had been the giant’s snoring. The giant is called *Skrýmir* at this stage in *SnEGylf* (cf. Ls. 62), but is later revealed as *Útgarda-Loki*; the *Hrbl.* poet apparently knew him by a third name, *Fjalarr* (cf. *fela* ‘to conceal’). Cf. Ls. 60 and 62, and the glove of the giant Grendel in *Beowulf*.
- 48 The subterranean world of the dead. Cf. Ls. 63.
- 49 Some lines detailing one of Hárbarðr’s exploits have perhaps been lost before this question.
- 50 This episode is otherwise unknown, but the sons of *Svárangr* ‘Clumsy’ are probably giants, as *Svárangr* appears among a list of giant-names in *SnESkáld* (I, 75, p. 111; see also p. 172 n. to verse 75/2 therein). The river might be the Ífing, which divides the giants’ territory from that of the gods in *Vm.* 16; alternatively, it might be one of the Élivágur, which seem to have the same function in *Hym.* 5.
- 51 They lost the battle.
- 52 Probably a giantess. A’s *einhæriv*, by contrast, is the acc. sg. of **einherja*, an unattested fem. form of *einheri*, a term generally used in the pl. to describe undead male champions in Valholl; perhaps A uses the fem. form to refer to a valkyrie.
- 53 Or, taking R’s reading, ‘long liaisons’.
- 54 This line presents textual and interpretative uncertainties.
- 55 A proverbial statement referring to the pain caused by wearing a dried-up shoe that has survived the winter.
- 56 *Berserkir*, literally ‘bear shirts’, were ferocious warriors, perhaps associated with Óðinn, who flew into a mad rage in battle.
- 57 ‘Hlér’s (i.e., Ægir’s) Island’ (*Hlér* ‘Sea’ being an alias of the sea-giant Ægir), now the Danish island of *Læsø* in the Kattegat.
- 58 This episode is otherwise unknown.
- 59 Pórr’s manservant, known for his fast running.
- 60 Or ‘when it’.
- 61 *Hrbl.* 40–43 are hard to interpret. The army might be that of the dead, of which Óðinn was leader; cf. *Hrbl.* 44.
- 62 Pórr apparently thinks he recognizes his adversary, but no other account of Óðinn threatening the Æsir is known. Perhaps Pórr mistakes the giantess-loving boatman for the sea-god Njørðr, who married a giantess and, as one of the Vanir, fought a war against the Æsir that, according to chapter 4 of *Ynglinga saga*, was settled by an exchange of hostages.
- 63 Literally, ‘a ring of the hand’.
- 64 Hárbarðr perhaps debases the notion of the ring as a sign of good faith by applying the term to his anus. In so doing, he might imply that Pórr enjoys homosexual activity. This could account for Pórr’s outrage in the next stanza—something that an alternative interpretation, of the ring as a manacle, does less well. Cf. Ls. 12.
- 65 The phrase ‘forests of home’ or ‘the world’s woods’ is not found elsewhere. Many editors emend *skógum* and *Hrbl.* 45 *skóga* ‘forests’ to *haugum* and *hauga* ‘mounds’, respectively,

to alliterate with *heimis* and get more obvious sense ('mounds of home' is closer to the 'cairns' of *Hrbl.* 45). But neither manuscript offers palaeographical support for this; some other verses in *Hrbl.* also lack alliteration; and forests, as the mysterious dwellings of outlaws and outsiders, make an apt metaphor for the otherworld of the dead. Hárbarðr is doubtless being cryptic to befuddle Pórr.

- 66 I.e., flattering.
- 67 Óðinn learns secret knowledge from the dead in *Háv.* 157 and *BDr.*
- 68 *Sif* '(Married) Relation' is Pórr's wife. No surviving myth proves Hárbarðr's claim, but Loki claims to have slept with Sif in *Ls.* 54, and his cutting of her hair in *SnEskáld* (I, 35, p. 41) might suggest intimacy.
- 69 Literally, 'You're speaking according to your mouth's counsel'.
- 70 The sense of the final words of this stanza (*efþú litumfaerir*) is uncertain. They are sometimes understood to mean 'if you had travelled through (all the day's) colours', i.e., 'if you had travelled night and day'. But *litum* might also mean 'with oars(?)' and represent a sexual insult ('oar' = 'penis'), following on from Óðinn's claim that Pórr has been cuckolded. A loose but effective translation in modern idiom might be 'if you'd put your oar in'.
- 71 Óðinn is apparently posing as a lowly herdsman as well as a ferryman.
- 72 'Pórr of the Æsir', a grand title.
- 73 'Manland'. A has *Valland* 'Gaul' or 'Land of the Slain'; cf. *Hrbl.* 24.
- 74 Óðinn tacitly withdraws his earlier claim, in *Hrbl.* 4, that Pórr's mother, here called *Fjorgyn*, is dead.
- 75 A's reading at *vpp rænnandi solv* gives different sense: 'by dawn'.
- 76 Presumably fiends of some sort.
- 77 A's variant text means 'Go now, to where all (*allir*) fierce ones may have you!'

Hymiskviða

Hymiskviða (*Hym.*) ‘The Lay of Hymir’ survives complete in both **R** (fol. 13v–15r) and **A** (fol. 5v–6v). The two versions differ little in content, but the latter is positioned between *Grm.* and *Vkv*. The now-established title *Hymiskviða* appears only in **A**, **R**’s text being headed *Pórr dró Miðgarðsorm* ‘Pórr fished for the Miðgarðsormr [‘the Snake of Miðgarðr’, i.e., the world-serpent]’.

The poem’s date and place of composition are uncertain, though scholars incline to the twelfth century or the first half of the thirteenth. However, archaeological evidence shows that myths about Pórr’s fishing for the Miðgarðsormr—the story central to this poem’s narrative—date back to at least the eighth century in Scandinavia. Furthermore, ancient mythic roots are suggested by broad parallels between Pórr’s fight with the Miðgarðsormr (a creature comparable to the Greco-Egyptian ouroboros and the Biblical Leviathan which Christ hooks in Patristic exegesis) and those of, for example, the Indian thunder-god Indra with Vrtra and the Greek Apollo with Python. In addition, the poem’s notion of divine feasting may have roots in the ancient Indo-European mythic concept of a divine feast for which sacred drink is prepared, despite opposition from giants or other monsters.

Hym.’s metre is *fornyrðislag*. Most stanzas have the normal four long lines, but instances with two, three and five lines also occur. The poem’s style is noteworthy because, of all the Eddic poems, *Hym.* has the most in common with Old Norse skaldic verse: numerous kennings and variations appear, and there is some unorthodox syntax. The poet also uses many unique words. Together, these attributes might suggest the work of a skaldic reviser of Eddic verse, or simply an original poet familiar with both poetic traditions.

A following prose section entitled *Frá Ægi ok goðum* ‘About Ægir and the gods’ links *Hym.* to the next poem in **R**, *Ls.*, which tells of Loki’s abuse of the gods at Ægir’s feast. The gods’ feasting in Ægir’s hall, which is enabled by Pórr’s successful quest for the giant Hymir’s cauldron in *Hym.*, is also mentioned in *Grm.* 45.

Hym. strings together four main narrative elements about Pórr, two of which are described more fully elsewhere in Old Norse literature:

1. The quest for the giant cauldron of the giant Hymir, which frames the other three main narrative elements. This story is otherwise alluded to only in a line from the mid-twelfth-century *First Grammatical Treatise*, which says *heyrdí til høddu, þá er Pórr bar hverinn* ‘you could hear the handle when Pórr carried

the cauldron',¹ in some younger kennings, and in the prose introduction to *Ls.* That Týr should accompany Þórr on a quest is unparalleled—Þórr's usual companion, as in *Brk.*, is Loki.

2. Þórr's fishing trip with Hymir, during which the god catches the Miðgarðsormr, is one of the best attested Norse myths. Þórr is probably shown fishing for this serpent on an eighth-century bronze plaque from Sweden and, more clearly, on four picture-stones: the Altuna Stone from Uppland, Sweden; Ardre Stone VIII from Gotland, Sweden; the Hørдум Stone from Jylland, Denmark; and the Gosforth Fishing Stone from Cumbria, England, which appears to show whales surrounding the bait (cf. *Hym.* 21), along with what might be part of the serpentine monster itself. These stones range in date from the eighth to the eleventh century.² The last two show a figure, presumably Hymir, about to cut Þórr's fishing line with an axe. Skaldic poems also refer to the encounter, providing details not found in *Hym.* The most noteworthy are six stanzas attributed to Bragi Boddason the Old in which Þórr hooks the sea-monster and a frightened Hymir cuts his fishing line;³ Úlf Uggason's c. 985 *Húsdrápa* 'House Poem' (*Húsdr.*), in stt. 3–6 of which Þórr beheads the serpent;⁴ a tenth-century stanza by Gamli Gnævaðarskáld, in which Þórr again kills the serpent;⁵ and three tenth-century verses by Eysteinn Valdason.⁶ *SnEGylf* (48, pp. 44–45), however, has the fullest account, which shows no clear use of *Hym.* It reads as follows, in summary:

Þórr's motivation is revenge for his humiliation by the trickery of the giant Skrýmir/Útgarða-Loki, during which he appeared to fail at various tests of strength, one of which was lifting a cat—in reality, the Miðgarðsormr in disguise. Þórr sets out alone, as a young man, and without his goats or chariot. He spends the night as a guest at Hymir's place and the next morning asks to go fishing with him. Hymir doubts he would be much use, but Þórr disputes this. Hymir tells Þórr to get bait, which he does by tearing the head off Himinhrjótr, Hymir's largest ox. The two row out to sea. Hymir is reluctant to row out too far because of the Miðgarðsormr, but Þórr rows on anyway. He baits his line with the ox-head and casts it overboard. On the sea-bed the serpent takes the bait and is hooked. It jerks away, smashing Þórr's fists onto the gunwale. But Þórr summons all his strength and, pushing his feet through the boat's bottom and onto the sea-bed, hauls the snake up. Þórr and the poison-spitting serpent stare at each other. Seeing this and realising that

1 E. Haugen, ed., *First Grammatical Treatise: the Earliest Germanic Phonology*, rev. 2nd edn (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 30–31.

2 For illustrations, see P. Meulengracht Sørensen, 'Thor's Fishing Expedition', rpt. in P. Acker and C. Larrington, ed., *The Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Mythology* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 119–37 at 124–26; C. del Zotto, ed., *La 'Hymskviða' e la pesca di þórr nella tradizione nordica* (Rome: Istituto di Glottologia della Università di Roma, 1979), pl. 8–11.

3 SPSMA III, 46–53.

4 SPSMA III, 411–17.

5 SPSMA III, 189–90.

6 SPSMA III, 185–88.

the boat is sinking, Hymir panics: he cuts Þórr's line just as the god is raising his hammer to strike the snake. Þórr throws his hammer after the sinking creature. Some people think the snake was beheaded there on the sea-bed, but the speaker (Hár) does not—he believes it is still alive. Þórr knocks Hymir overboard and wades ashore.

3. Hymir's threefold test of Þórr's strength: to carry the boat or the whales, to break a cup, and to carry the cauldron. As noted above, the third task is alluded to in the *First Grammatical Treatise*. Þórr's strength is also tested, albeit differently, several times by the giant Skrýmir/Útgarða-Loki in *SnEGylf*. Folktales contain parallels, too: for example, in one Swedish story a giant offers a drink to his guests, but the hero's companions cannot lift the goblet; the hero lifts it easily and kills the giant by hurling it against his head.
4. The laming of Þórr's goat. *SnEGylf* (44, p. 37) tells a different version of this story, one in which the context differs, the farmer is unnamed and not said to be a giant, Loki is not blamed, and the laming is caused by physical attack, rather than curse. In summary:

Þórr and Loki arrive at the house of a peasant farmer [cf. Egill in *Hym.*]. Þórr kills his goats, which are then skinned and put in a cooking-pot. The two gods, the farmer, his wife, their son Þjálf and daughter Róskva share the meal. Þórr tells the farmer and his family to put the goat's bones on the goatskins. They do so, but Þjálf takes one of the thigh-bones and splits it with his knife to get at the marrow. Þórr gets up in the small hours and resurrects the goats by blessing them with his hammer. The goats get up, but one of them is lame in a hind leg with a broken thigh-bone. Þórr is furious but pacified by the household's terror. He accepts Þjálf and Róskva as compensation. He leaves his goats with the farmer, and he, Loki, Þjálf and Róskva set out for the land of giants.

A similar story occurs in British records in the early ninth-century Latin *Historia Brittonum* 'History of the Britons'.⁷ In short:

Saint Germanus visited a wicked king called Benlli (*Benli*), but was refused entry to his castle. One of the king's servants invited Germanus to spend the night at his house. Having no food other than a cow and her calf, the servant killed the calf, cooked it and laid it before them. Germanus ordered that none of its bones be broken, and in the morning it was found alive and well beside its mother.

As John McKinnell observes, *Hym.*'s narrative corresponds to a common story-pattern found in at least seven other versions in Snorri's *Prose Edda*, Saxo's *GD* and *Porsteins þátr bæjarmagns* 'The Story of Porsteinn Mansion-Might'.⁸ In this archetypal pattern, Þórr, generally with one or two companions who are little or no help to him, visits a giant; he receives help from a giantess and has to cross a dangerous river or sea; the giant's hospitality is poor—or worse; the giant initiates contests which Þórr usually

⁷ J. Morris, ed., *Nennius: British History and The Welsh Annals* (London: Phillimore, 1980), pp. 26–27, 67 (§32).

⁸ J. McKinnell, *Both One and Many: Essays on Change and Variety in Late Norse Heathenism* (Rome: Il Calamo, 1994), chapter 3.

wins, sometimes by killing the giant or destroying a house-pillar; Þórr returns home pursued by giants, whom he slays with a special weapon.

In addition, comparisons may be drawn with other Eddic poems in which a questing god visits a giant. In *FSk*. Freyr's servant Skírnir visits giant-land on his master's behalf to win the giantess Gerðr; in *Prk*. Þórr and Loki visit the giant Prymr to regain Þórr's stolen hammer. Both quests are successful and the latter ends similarly with Þórr slaughtering the giants with his hammer. *Hym*.s affectionate comedy involving Þórr also finds parallel in *Prk*., and gains poignancy from knowledge of his death against the Miðgarðsormr in their final battle, as described in *Vsp*.

Synopsis

The gods, being thirsty at their meal, learn by augury of a fine collection of cauldrons belonging to the sea-giant Ægir (1). Þórr orders Ægir to hold frequent drinking feasts for them (2). He reluctantly agrees, on condition that Þórr bring him a cauldron big enough to hold ale for all the gods (3). The gods are unable to get one until Týr reveals that his father, the giant Hymir, owns a mile-deep cauldron (4–5).

Having decided to try to get this cauldron (6), Týr and Þórr set out from Ásgarðr for Hymir's home 'east of the Élivágar' (rivers) at 'heaven's end'. On arrival, Þórr leaves his goats with a certain Egill and enters Hymir's hall (7). Týr sees his nine-hundred-headed grandmother and beautiful mother (8). The latter hides the two gods below some cauldrons and behind a pillar for fear of her husband's bad temper with guests (9).

Hymir arrives home late and icy (10). His wife tells him of his son's long-awaited return and of Þórr's presence (11). Hymir's initial glance shatters the pillar and the cross-beam (12). As a result, nine kettles fall to the ground, only one of which remains intact—the quest cauldron (13). Hymir warily has three bulls beheaded and boiled for them to eat (14), two of which Þórr eats (15). Hymir, now short of food, says they will have to hunt for more (16).

Þórr then offers to row on the fishing-trip, if Hymir will provide the bait (17). Þórr accepts the challenge to get bait from Hymir's herd: he tears the head off a pure-black ox (18–19). Out at sea, Þórr urges the giant to row further, but Hymir is reluctant (20). Hymir catches two whales (21). Þórr baits his line with the ox-head and hooks the Miðgarðsormr (22). He drags it up to the gunwale and strikes it with his hammer (23), causing monsters to roar, the ground to resound and the whole earth to shudder. The serpent sinks back into the sea (24).

Hymir rows back silently (25), and asks Þórr to carry his whales home or to moor the boat (26). Þórr does both (27). Still the giant tests Þórr: he must break a goblet to prove his strength (28). At first, he fails, despite having thrown it straight through some columns (29). But then Týr's mother tells him to strike it against Hymir's skull (30). Þórr summons all his strength and shatters the cup on Hymir's head (31).

Hymir laments his loss (32), but has one last challenge for Þórr—to carry the cauldron home. Týr twice fails to lift it (33), but Þórr, his feet going through the floor, lifts it onto his head and leaves (34). After Þórr and Týr have travelled a long way, Þórr looks back and sees that they are being pursued by Hymir and other giants (35). He slays them with his hammer (36). A little later, one of his goats (which he has presumably collected from Egill) collapses, lame in one leg. Loki is to blame (37). Þórr gets two children (probably Egill's) in compensation (38). Þórr arrives back in Ásgarðr with the cauldron, thereby enabling the gods to drink ale well at Ægir's house each winter (39).

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Hymiskviða

Pórr dró Miðgarðsorm

1. Ár valtívar veiðar námu,
ok sumblsamir, áðr saðir yrði;
hristu teina ok á hlaut sá,
fundu þeir at Ægis ørkost hvera.
2. Sat bergbúi, barnteitr, fyrir,
mjók glíkr megi miskorblinda;
leit í augu Yggs barn í þrá:
'Pú skalt Ásum opt sumbl gøra!'
3. Qnn fekk jøtni orðbæginn halr,
hugði at hefndum hann næst við goð;
bað hann Sifjar ver sér foera hver:
'þanns ek qllum ql yðr of heita!'
4. Né þat máttu mærir tívar
ok ginnregin of geta hvergi,
unz af tryggðum Týr Hlórriða
ástráð mikit einum sagði:
5. 'Býr fyr austan Élivága
hundvíss Hymir at himins enda;
á minn faðir, móðugr, ketil,
rúmbrugðinn hver, rastar djúpan.
6. 'Veiztu ef þiggjum þann lögvelli?'
'Ef, vinr, vélar vit gørvum til!'
7. Fóru drjúgum dag þann fram,
Ásgarði frá, unz til Egils kvómu;
hirði hann hafra horngøfgasta,
hurfu at høllu er Hymir átti.
8. Møgr fann qmmu mjók leiða sér —
hafði høfða hundruð níu!
En qnnur gekk, algullin, fram,
brúnhvít, bera bjórveig syni:
9. 'Áttniðr jøtna, ek viljak ykkr
hugfulla tvá und hvera setja:
er minn frí mørgu sinni
gløggr við gesti, gorr ills hugar!'

The Lay of Hymir¹

Pórr fished for the Miðgarðsormr²

1. Early,³ the gods of the slain caught game,
and were eager for a feast, before they were full;
they shook twigs and inspected sacrificial blood,⁴
they found at Ægir's⁵ an ample choice of cauldrons.
2. The cliff-dweller⁶ sat there, merry as a child,
much like the son of a mash-blender;⁷
Yggr's child⁸ looked into his eyes in defiance:
'You shall often make⁹ drinking-feasts for the Æsir!'
3. The word-trying man¹⁰ made work for the giant,
he¹¹ brooded revenge at once against the god;
he called on Sif's husband¹² to bring him a cauldron:
'the one in which I can brew ale for you all!'
4. The glorious gods and the mighty powers
could not get it anywhere,
until Týr,¹³ out of true loyalty,
spoke a great piece of kindly advice to Hlórriði¹⁴ alone:
5. 'To the east¹⁵ of the Élivágar¹⁶ lives
all-wise Hymir¹⁷ at heaven's end,¹⁸
my fierce father¹⁹ owns a kettle,
a capacious cauldron, one league deep.'
6. 'Do you know if we can get that liquid-boiler?'²⁰
'If, my friend, we two use wiles to do so!'
7. They travelled far away that day,²¹
from Ásgarðr,²² until they came to Egill's,²³
he tended the nobly-horned he-goats,²⁴
[and] they²⁵ turned to the hall which Hymir owned.
8. The young man²⁶ found his grandmother very loathsome to him —
she had nine hundred heads!
But another²⁷ came forward, all-golden,
white-browed, to bring her son a beer-drink:
9. 'Offspring of giants, I want to put you
two brave ones under the cauldrons;²⁸
my beloved²⁹ is on many occasions
stingy with guests, inclined to ill temper!'

10. En váskapaðr varð síðbúinn
harðráðr Hymir heim af veiðum;
gekk inn í sal — glumðu jöklar —
var karls, er kom, kinnskógr frerinn.
11. 'Ver þú heill, Hymir, í hugum góðum,
nú er sonr kominn til sala þinna —
sá er vit vættum — af vegi löngum!
Fylgir honum Hróðrs andskoti,
vinr verliða, Véurr heitir sá.
12. 'Séðu hvar sitja und salar gafli,
svá forða sér — stendr súl fyrir!'
Sundr stókk súla fyr sjón jötuns,
en áðr í tvaу áss brotnaði.
13. Stukku átta, en einn af þeim,
hverr harðsleginn, heill af þolli;
fram gengu þeir, en forn jötunn
sjónum leiddi sinn andskota.
14. Sagðit honum hugr vel, þá er hann sá
gýgjar groeti á gólf kominn;
þar váru þjórar þrír of tekni,
bað senn jötunn sjóða ganga.
15. Hvern létu þeir hofði skemmta
ok á seyði síðan báru;
át Sifjar verr, áðr sofa gengi,
einn með ollo øxn tvá Hymis!
16. Þótti hárum Hrungnis spjalla
verðr Hlórriða vel fullmikill:
'Munum at apni qðrum verða
við veiðimat vér þrir lifa!'
17. Véurr kvazk vilja á vág róa,
ef ballr jötunn beitur gæfi;
'Hverfðu til hjarðar, ef þú hug trúir,
brjótr berg-Dana, beitur sækja!'
18. 'Þess vænti ek, at þér myni
ogn af oxa auðfeng vera!'
Sveinn sýsliga sveif til skógar,
þar er uxi stóð alsvartr fyrir.

10. And misshapen³⁰ Hymir of hard-counsel
was late ready [to return] home from hunting;
he went into the hall — icicles clinked —
the old man's cheek-forest³¹ was frozen when he came.
11. 'Be hale, Hymir, [and] in good spirits,
now a son has come to your halls —
the one we two have waited for — from a long way off!³²
Hróðr's enemy³³ accompanies him,
the friend of humankind, the one called Véurr.³⁴
12. 'See where they sit under the hall's gable,
so they protect themselves — a pillar stands in front!'
The pillar burst apart before the giant's glance,
and before that a beam³⁵ broke in two.
13. Eight [cauldrons] fell down, but [only] one of them,
a hard-hammered cauldron, [fell] intact from the hanging-peg;
they³⁶ came forward, and the ancient giant
tracked his enemy³⁷ with his eyes.
14. His mind had misgivings³⁸ when he saw
the griever of a giantess³⁹ had come on to the floor;
three bulls were taken there,
the giant ordered them to be boiled at once.
15. They made each one shorter by a head⁴⁰
and then carried them to the cooking-pit;
Sif's husband ate, before he went to sleep,
two of Hymir's oxen, whole, on his own!
16. It seemed to the hoary friend of Hrungnir⁴¹
that Hlórriði's meal was, well, large enough:
'Tomorrow evening, we three will have to live
on food caught by fishing!'
17. Véurr said he was willing to row on the surging sea,
if the bold giant would give him bait;
'Turn to the herd, if you trust your courage,
breaker of rock-Danir,⁴² to seek bait!'⁴³
18. 'This I expect, that bait from an ox
will be easy for you to obtain!'⁴⁴
The boy⁴⁵ turned fast to the forest,
before which there stood an all-black ox.⁴⁶

19. Braut af þjóri þurs ráðbani
hátún ofan horna tveggja;
'Verk þikkja þín verri myCLU
kjóla valdi, en þú kyrr sitir!'
20. Bað hlunngota hafra dróttinn
átrunn apa útarr fóera;
en sá jötunn sína talði
litla fýsi at róa lengra.
21. Dró mærr Hymir móðugr hvali
einn á Ǫngli upp senn tvá;
en aprí skut Óðni sifjaðr,
Véurr, við vélar vað gørði sér.
22. Egndi á Ǫngul, sá er ǫldum bergr,
orms einbani, uxu hófði;
gein við Ǫngli, sú er goð fjá,
umgjorð neðan allra landa.
23. Dró djarfliga dáðrakkr Þórr
orm eitrfán upp at borði;
hamri kníði háfjall skarar
ofljótt ofan úlfs hnítbróður.
24. Hreingálkn hlumðu, en hólkñ þutu,
fór in forna fold ǫll saman;
søkkðisk síðan sá fiskr í mar.
25. Óteitr jötunn er þeir aprí reru,
svá at ár Hymir ekki mælti;
veifði hann rœði veðrs annars til:
26. 'Mundu um vinna verk hálft við mik,
at þú heim hvali haf til bœjar
eða flotbrúsa festir okkarn.'
27. Gekk Hlórriði, greip á stafni,
vatt með austri upp lögþáki;
einn, með árum ok með austskotu,
bar hann til bœjar brimsvín jötuns
ok holtriða hver í gegnum.
28. Ok enn jötunn um afrendi
þrágirni vanr við Þór senti;
kvaðat mann ramman, þótt róa kynni
krópturligan, nema kálk bryti.

19. The giant's counsel-killer⁴⁷ broke from above the bull
the high-meadow of two horns;⁴⁸
'Your works seem much worse
to the ruler of ships than when you sit quiet!'⁴⁹
20. The lord of goats⁵⁰ asked the offspring of apes⁵¹
to row the roller-stallion⁵² further out;
but the giant declared he had
little desire to row any longer.⁵³
21. Famous, moody⁵⁴ Hymir at once hauled up,
by himself, two whales on a hook;
and back in the stern the one related to Óðinn,
Véurr, prepared a line for himself with wiles.⁵⁵
22. The one who saves men, the snake's lone slayer,⁵⁶
baited the hook with the ox's head;
it gaped at the hook,⁵⁷ the one whom gods hate,⁵⁸
the girdle of all lands,⁵⁹ from below.
23. Deed-brave Pórr daringly dragged
the venom-gleaming snake up to the gunwale;
with his hammer he struck from above the extremely hideous
high-mountain of hair⁶⁰ of the wolf's birth-brother.⁶¹
24. Reindeer-monsters⁶² roared,⁶³ and stony grounds resounded,
all the ancient earth shuddered;⁶⁴
then that fish⁶⁵ sank into the sea.⁶⁶
25. The giant [was] gloomy when they rowed back,
such that Hymir at first said nothing;
he turned the rudder⁶⁷ to another tack:
26. 'You would be sharing half the work with me
if you bring the whales back to the farm
or make fast our floating-buck.'⁶⁸
27. Hlórriði went [and] grasped the prow,
hoisted up the sea-steed⁶⁹ with the bilge-water;
alone, with oars and with bilge-bailer,
he carried the giant's surf-swine⁷⁰ to the farm
and through a valley of wooded ridges.⁷¹
28. And still the giant, accustomed to stubbornness,
disputed with Pórr about strength;
he said no man was strong, even if he could row mightily,
unless he could break a goblet.

29. En Hlórríði, er at hǫndum kom,
brátt lét bresta brattstein gleri;
sló hann sitjandi súlur í gógnum,
báru þó heilan fyr Hymi síðan.
30. Unz þat in fríða frilla kendi,
ástráð mikit eitt, er vissi:
'Drep við haus Hymis — hann er harðari,
kostmóðs jötuns, kálki hverjum!'
31. Harðr reis á kné, hafra dróttinn,
færðisk allra í ásmegin;
heill var karli hjálmsstofn ofan,
en víngerill valr rifnaði.
32. 'Morg veit ek mæti mér gengin frá,
er ek kálki sé ór knjám hrundit.'
Karl orð um kvað: 'Knákat ek segja
aptr ævagi, "þú ert, qlðr, of heitt!"
33. 'Pat er til kostar, ef koma mættið
út ór óru qlkjól hofi';
Týr leitaði tysvar hrcera,
stóð at hváru hverr kyrr fyrir.
34. Faðir Móða fekk á þremi,
ok í gegnum steig gólf niðr í sal;
hóf sér á hofuð upp hver Sifjar verr,
en á hælum hringar skullu.
35. Fóru lengi áðr líta nam
aptr Óðins sonr einu sinni;
sá hann ór hreysum með Hymi austan
fólkdrót fara fjölhøfðaða.
36. Hóf hann sér af herðum hver standana,
veifði hann Mjöllni morðgjörnum fram,
okhraun/hvala hann alla drap.
37. Fórut lengi áðr liggja nam
hafr Hlórríða hálfdaður fyrir;
var skirr skókuls skakkr á banni,
en því inn lævísi Loki um olli.

29. And Hlórriði, when it came to his hands,
soon made steep stone⁷² break with the glass;
sitting, he struck it⁷³ through pillars,⁷⁴
but they brought it [back] intact to Hymir.
30. Until the fair loved one⁷⁵ imparted
one great piece of loving advice which she knew:
'Strike it against Hymir's skull — it's harder,
the choice-weary⁷⁶ giant's, than any goblet!'⁷⁷
31. The hard lord of he-goats⁷⁸ rose at the knee,
assumed his full Áss-strength,⁷⁹
intact was the top of the old man's helmet-stump,⁸⁰
but the round⁸¹ wine-vessel was riven.
32. 'Many treasures, I know, have departed from me,
when⁸² I see the goblet dashed from my knees.'⁸³
The old man⁸⁴ spoke words: 'I can't say
ever again, "You, ale, are brewed!"'
33. 'It's your opportunity [to see] if you can take⁸⁵
the ale-ship⁸⁶ out of our farmstead',⁸⁷
Týr tried twice to shift it,
[but] each time the cauldron stood still before him.⁸⁸
34. Móði's father⁸⁹ grasped it by the rim,
and through the floor in the hall stepped down,⁹⁰
Sif's husband heaved the cauldron up on to his head,
and at his heels the rings⁹¹ clattered.
35. They went a long way⁹² before
Óðinn's son looked back one time;
he saw advancing from stone-heaps, with Hymir, from the east,
a warrior-host of many-headed ones.⁹³
36. He heaved the [high-]standing cauldron from his shoulders,
he swung murder-eager Mjöllnir⁹⁴ forward,
and he slew all the lava-whales.⁹⁵
- 37.⁹⁶ They had not gone far before
Hlórriði's goat lay half-dead before them;
the trace's team-mate⁹⁷ was lamed⁹⁸ by a curse,⁹⁹
and the crafty Loki¹⁰⁰ was the cause of that.

38. En ér heyrt hafið — hvír kann um þat
goðmálugra górr at skilja —
hver af hraunbúa hann laun um fekk,
er hann bæði galt börn sín fyrir.
39. Þróttóflugr kom á þing goða,
ok hafði hver, þanns Hymir átti;
en véar hverjan vel skulu drekka
qlör at Ægis eitrhormeitið.

38. But you have heard — everyone who knows
tales of the gods can tell it more fully —
what recompense he¹⁰¹ received from the lava-dweller,¹⁰²
when he¹⁰³ paid for it with both his children.¹⁰⁴
39. The one of great strength¹⁰⁵ came to the gods' assembly,
and he had the cauldron, the one which Hymir owned;
and holy ones¹⁰⁶ shall drink ale well
at Ægir's [home] each venom-rope-cutter.¹⁰⁷

Textual Apparatus to *Hymiskviða*

Hymiskviða] This title, now traditional, appears only in A. R's rubricated title is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume; the heading *Pórr dró Miðgarðsorm* is taken from its transcription. This edition is based on R.

Ár 1/1] The first letter is large, inset and rubricated, but faded, in R

1/8 *hvera*] A *hværia*

2/8 *gora*] A *gæfa*

3/3 *hefndum*] R *hefðom*; A *hæfnd*

3/7 *panns*] R *pann*; A *panz*

3/7-8 *qlllum ql yðr*] A *ollvm yðr ol*

7/1-2] A *forv drivgan dag fraliga*

7/4 *Egil's*] A *ægis* 'Ægir's'

9/3 *hugfulla*] R written twice

9/5 *fri*] A *faðir* 'father'

9/8 *gørr*] R *geyrr*; A *gærr*

10/2 *síðbúinn*] A absent

12/3 *forða sér*] A *forðaz*

13/5 *þeir*] A absent

13/8 *andskota*] so A; R *aNscota*

14/2 *hann*] A absent

14/3 *gýjar*] R and A *gýiar*

14/7 *senn*] A *svn*

18/2 *myni*] A *mvnit*

20/3 *áttrunn*] A *attrænn*

20/6 *talði*] in A corrected from *milldi*

21/4 *senn*] A *sænn eða*

22/5 *qngli*] A *agni*

23/1 *djarfliga*] so A; R *diafliga*

24/1] *hlumðu*] A *hruto*

26/1 *um*] A *of*

27/6 *með*] A absent

27/9 *holtriða*] A *hollt riða*; R *holtriba*

28/1 *Ok*] A *Enn*

28/2 *um afrendi*] **A** *afafrændi*

30/1 *in*] so **A** *hin*; **R** *ip*

30/5 *haus*] **A** absent

30/7 *kostmóðs*] **A** *kostmoðr*

30/8 *hverjum*] so **A** *hværivm*; **R** *hverio*

31/1 *reis*] **A** absent

32/3 *er*] so **A** *ær*; **R** absent

32/4 *ór*] **A** *fíri* (cf. *Fyrir* ‘before, in front of’)

32/8 *ert*] **A** *ær*

33/2 *mættið*] **A**’s *mættir* presumably addresses Þórr alone

34/3 *steig*] **A** *stoð*

35/8 *fjölhofðaða*] so **A** *fiolhofðaða*; **R** *fiolþ havfdaþa*

36/5 *hraunhvala*] **R** *hravnvala*; **A** *hravnhvali*

37/8 *um*] **A** of

38/1 *ér*] **A** *þær* (i.e., *þér*)

38/2 *um*] **A** of

38/6 *um*] **A** of

38/7 *er*] **A** absent

38/7 *bæði galt*] **A** *gallt bæði*

39/5 *véar*] **A** *veaRr*

39/8 *eitrhørmeitið*] **R** *eitt havrmeitiþ*; **A** *eitt hormeitið* (-*ið* abbreviated)

Notes to the Translation

- 1 The title *Hymiskviða*, by which this poem is now customarily known, appears only in **A**.
- 2 ‘Miðgarðr’s Snake’, the world-encircling serpent. This heading occurs only in **R**.
- 3 I.e., in early/ancient days.
- 4 An act of augury. The twigs were perhaps dipped in blood, shaken, and the future divined from the blood-splashes. Cf. *Vsp.* 61.
- 5 Ægir ‘Sea’, a giant.
- 6 Ægir.
- 7 A ‘mash-blender’ being a brewer of ale, but the interpretation is conjectural. Possibly it is a proper noun.
- 8 Yggr ‘Terrible One’ is an alias of Óðinn; his child is Þórr, who often killed giants.
- 9 **A**’s variant reading *gæfa* (*gefa*) means ‘give’.
- 10 Þórr anthropomorphized.

- 11 *Ægir.*
- 12 Þórr, whose wife is *Sif*'(Married) Relation'.
- 13 'God', one of the *Æsir*. Some scholars argue for the common noun *týr* 'god' here, the referent then potentially being Loki, Þórr's crafty companion in other stories.
- 14 A name for Þórr. It may mean 'Bellowing-Beast (i.e., Pig/Goat) Rider/Driver'.
- 15 Giants generally live in the east.
- 16 'Snow/Hail-Storm-Waves', a term for various primaeval rivers.
- 17 A giant, the etymology of whose name is uncertain; there are various possibilities, among which is a relationship to OE *heamol* 'niggardly', which would be in keeping with Hymir's stingy character in *Hym.* 9. He is also mentioned in a kenning in *Harkv.* 2, where he is perhaps confused with the primordial giant Ymir (*SPSMA I*, 95–96).
- 18 A folk-etymological link between Hymir and *himinn* 'heaven' appears likely. Cf. *Vm.* 37.
- 19 Only in *Hym.* is Týr said to be the son of a giant.
- 20 It appears that Þórr asks this question.
- 21 A's variant reading means 'They journeyed swiftly for a whole day'.
- 22 'God-Yard/Enclosure', home of the gods.
- 23 Egill is probably a giant. A's reading *Ægis* 'Ægir's' is doubtless a scribal error.
- 24 The goats that draw Þórr's chariot. *SnEGylf* (21, p. 23) calls them *Tanngnjóstr* 'Tooth-Grinder' and *Tanngrisnir* 'Tooth-Distorter'.
- 25 Týr and Þórr.
- 26 Týr anthropomorphized.
- 27 Another giantess, in this case Hymir's wife, Týr's mother.
- 28 Apparently, the cauldrons were hung from, or rested on, a beam. Cf. *Hym.* 12, 13. The giantess's rationale seems to be that there they would receive protection by being behind a pillar.
- 29 Hymir. A's reading *faðir* 'father' is probably a mistake.
- 30 Literally, 'woe-shaped/created'. Emendation to *vásskapaðr* 'shaped by bad weather' has been proposed. Word-play is possible.
- 31 I.e., beard.
- 32 The speaker is apparently Hymir's wife.
- 33 Þórr. Hróðr 'Glorious/Famed One' is otherwise unknown. He might be a giant, but a connection or identification with Fenrir—called Hróð(rs)vitnir in *Ls.* 39 and *Grm.* 39—is another possibility; cf. the pitting of Þórr against the wolf in *Vsp.* 54.
- 34 Þórr, who is similarly *Miðgarðs véurr* 'Miðgarðr's guardian' in *Vsp.* 54.
- 35 Here *áss* 'beam' may pun on *áss* 'god'.
- 36 Þórr and Týr.
- 37 Þórr.
- 38 Literally, 'his mind/heart did not speak to him well'.
- 39 The 'griever of a giantess' is Þórr, who makes giantesses weep by slaying their menfolk.
- 40 I.e., they beheaded the bulls.

- 41 'Friend of Hrungnir' is a kenning for 'giant', here Hymir. Hrungnir was a giant whom Þórr slew by smashing his skull with Mjöllnir, according to *SnE Skáld* (I, 17, pp. 20–24); cf. *Hrbl.* 14–15.
- 42 A kenning for Þórr, rock-*Danir* 'rock-Danes' being giants.
- 43 Hymir speaks these words.
- 44 By contrast, A's text means 'This I expect, that bait from an ox won't be easy for you to obtain!'
- 45 Þórr. In *SnEGylf* (48, p. 44) he visits Hymir *sem ungr drengr* 'as a young youth/boy'.
- 46 In manuscripts of *SnEGylf*, the ox is called *Himinhrjótr* 'Sky Snorer' or *Himinhrjóðr* 'Sky Destroyer', among other variants.
- 47 Þórr, as one who plots Hymir's death or who defeats the giant's plan to destroy him.
- 48 A kenning for the ox's horned head.
- 49 These words are presumably spoken by Hymir, who refers to himself as the 'ruler of ships'. A less likely interpretation has Þórr as the 'ruler of ships': 'Your work seems much worse, ruler of ships, than when you sit quiet!' Some scholars propose that a following stanza or stanzas describing how Hymir and Þórr rowed out to sea have been lost.
- 50 Þórr.
- 51 Hymir. 'Ape' has connotations of foolishness.
- 52 Boat.
- 53 Hymir has apparently declined Þórr's offer to row (*Hym.* 17).
- 54 Alternatively, 'courageous' or 'fierce'.
- 55 Cf. *Hym.* 6.
- 56 Þórr. Some skaldic poems say that he killed the snake on this fishing-trip; cf. *Vsp.* 54.
- 57 A's *agni* means 'bait'.
- 58 The Miðgarðsormr.
- 59 Again the Miðgarðsormr, which encircles all lands.
- 60 A kenning for 'head'.
- 61 The Miðgarðsormr, brother of the wolf Fenrir. Alternatively, '... of the wolf's battle-brother', again referring to the Miðgarðsormr, which will fight alongside Fenrir at Ragnarok.
- 62 An obscure term, perhaps for monstrous antlered creatures or wolves which prey on reindeer. But Ursula Dronke emends *heingálkn* 'hone-wreckers', 'enemies of the whetstone', which she interprets, with reference to the story of Hrungnir's hurling of a whetstone at Þórr, as 'enemies of giants'.
- 63 A's *hruto* (*hrutu*) means 'staggered, fell'.
- 64 Cf. *Vsp.* 51.
- 65 The Miðgarðsormr, a snake which is also called a 'fish' in skaldic verse.
- 66 The reason for the serpent's sinking is unclear. Old Norse traditions differ as to whether Þórr killed it at this point, or whether Hymir cut the fishing line and so enabled it to escape. Snorri favours the latter and adds that Þórr knocked Hymir overboard in his rage.
- 67 *Ræði* 'rudder' may pun on, or be a mistake for, *ræðu*, acc. sg. of *ræða* 'conversation'.
- 68 A poetic term for 'boat', tailored to Þórr's caprine associations. Some scholars interpret this passage as a question: 'Would you share half the work with me ...?'

- 69 Another poetic term for 'boat'.
- 70 A poetic term for either 'boat' or 'whale(s)'.
- 71 There is more word-play here, as *hver(r)* 'valley' means literally 'cauldron', the primary sense elsewhere in this poem.
- 72 The stone of tall pillars.
- 73 The glass goblet.
- 74 Cf. *SnEskáld* (I, 18, p. 25), in which Þórr throws a lump of molten iron through a pillar, the giant Geirrøðr and a wall. Þórr was a god of house-pillars.
- 75 Hymir's wife.
- 76 Possibly the sense is that Hrungnir was sleepy, having eaten choice items of food.
- 77 Cf. the stone-headed giant Hrungnir, whom Þórr slays in another story.
- 78 Þórr.
- 79 I.e., divine strength. *SnEGylf* (48, p. 44) uses the same expression (*færðisk í ásmegin*) of Þórr when the god hauls up the Miðgarðsormr.
- 80 A kenning for Hymir's 'head'.
- 81 Perhaps *valr* 'round' puns on *valr* 'slain (body)'.
- 82 So A, but absent from R.
- 83 I.e., 'taken from my lap'. The speaker is evidently Hymir.
- 84 Hymir.
- 85 Translation uncertain.
- 86 A poetic term for 'cauldron'.
- 87 *Hof*, here translated 'farmstead', more usually denotes a temple.
- 88 It may be remembered, however, that Týr is typically imagined as one-handed; see the introductory prose to *Ls*.
- 89 Þórr.
- 90 I.e., his feet went through the floor. A's *stóð* means 'stood'. Cf. *SnEGylf* (48, pp. 44–45) in which Þórr forces his feet through the boat's bottom and onto the sea-bed when hauling up the Miðgarðsormr, an account partly corroborated by two picture-stones.
- 91 Presumably the rings of a hanging-chain attached to the cauldron.
- 92 Some editors emend to *Fórut lengi* 'They had not gone a long way', to match *Hym.* 37.
- 93 Giants; cf. *Hym.* 8.
- 94 'Miller/Crusher', Þórr's hammer.
- 95 A poetic term for 'giants'.
- 96 Ursula Dronke considers stt. 37–38 intrusive. They clearly resemble an episode in *SnEGylf* (44, p. 37) in which an unnamed farmer hands over his son, Þjálfi, and daughter, Rǫskva, to Þórr as compensation for the former having lamed one of Þórr's goats; that episode does not, however, blame Loki.
- 97 A poetic term for 'goat'.
- 98 Literally 'twisted', 'askew'.
- 99 The words *á banni* 'in/by a (banning) curse' perhaps pun on *á beini* 'in the bone/leg'.
- 100 The trickster-god.

- 101 Þórr.
- 102 A giant, possibly the one called Egill in *Hym.* 7.
- 103 The giant.
- 104 The poet's direct address to the audience in this stanza is unusual.
- 105 Þórr.
- 106 Gods.
- 107 A likely kenning for 'winter', the season which kills ('cuts') snakes ('venom-ropes').

Lokasenna

Lokasenna (*Ls.*) ‘Loki’s Flyting’ is Old Norse literature’s longest and most famous instance of a genre of antagonistic verse exemplified earlier in **R** by *Hrbl.*, an altogether rougher work. As a flyting, *Ls.* is especially distinguished in scope and ambition by the sheer number of personages—gods and goddesses—pierced by Loki’s verbal barbs and by the range of its mythic references. *Ls.* is also the principal showcase for Loki’s swiftness and causticity of thought and utterance. That such a trait was more widely recognized is indicated by the conclusion of a myth, recorded in *SnESkáld* (I, 35, p. 43), in which two dwarves attempt to sew Loki’s lips together but succeed merely in tearing off the edges of his mouth, a result probably shown earlier on a carving on a Viking Age stone found near Snaptun in Denmark.¹ It also explains Loki’s (contextually irrelevant) question about the fate of those who ‘wound each other with words’ in *Rm.* 3.

Ls. survives only in **R** (fol. 15r–17r) and later, paper manuscripts, though there are related passages in *SnEGylf* and *SnESkáld* (see notes to the prose and st. 29). Additionally, Snorri probably alludes to *Ls.* when describing Loki as *rægjanda ok vélandi góðanna* ‘the accuser and trickster of the gods’ and *þrætudólg Heimdalar ok Skaða* ‘the disputatious opponent of Heimdallr and Skaði’ (*SnESkáld*, I, 16, p. 20).

Ls.’s date of composition is uncertain, though it clearly existed by c. 1225, the date of Snorri’s work. We cannot even say confidently whether it originated in heathen times or Christian (or during the transition period), as its scurrilous presentation of the Norse gods has been variously explained as tragicomedy within a strong heathen faith, disillusionment in the twilight years of paganism, Christian determination to discredit the old religion, and playful thirteenth-century antiquarianism.

It is also unclear whether similarities of wording with other Eddic poems are indications of borrowing or the shared use of oral formulas, the two most striking correspondences being with *FSk.* and *Hrbl.*:

¹ The stone is described and illustrated in H. J. Madsen, ‘Loke fra Snaptun/The god Loki from Snaptun’, in P. Kjærum and R. A. Olsen, ed., *Oldtidens Ansigt/Faces of the Past* (Copenhagen: Kongelige Nordiske oldskriftselskab, 1980), pp. 180–81. See also K. J. Wanner, ‘Sewn Lips, Propped Jaws, and a Silent Åss (or Two): Doing Things with Mouths in Norse Myth’, *JEGP* 111 (2012), 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.5406/jenglgermphil.111.1.0001>; S. Grundy, *God in Flames, God in Fetters: Loki’s Role in the Northern Religions* (New Haven, CT: Troth Publications, 2015), pp. 36–39.

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|---------------|---|
| Ls. 53/1-3: | Heill ver þú nú, Loki, ok tak við hrímkálki,
fullum forns mjaðar. |
| FSk. 37/1-3: | Heill verðu nú heldr, sveinn, ok tak við hrímkálki
fullum forns mjaðar. |
| Ls. 60/4-6: | sízt í hanzka þumlungi hnúkðir þú, einheri,
ok þóttiska þú þá Þórr vera. |
| Hrbl. 26/3-5: | af hrœzlu ok hugbleyði þér var í hanzka troðit,
ok þóttiska þú þá Þórr vera. |

In either case, the poems may be drawing on a common source. The ironic twists that *Ls.* may well give to traditional myths makes it inherently more likely to be a borrower than a lender, and, if so, the possibility that it is a late work increases, though not necessarily by much.

The compositional date (or dates) of the prose prologue and epilogue are just as uncertain. We can, however, be fairly confident that a passage (probably in prose) resembling the prologue was known to Snorri, most likely in association with the poem, by c. 1225, since *SnEskáld* (I, 33, pp. 40–41) gives an account of the circumstances of Loki's argument with the gods that contains several verbal similarities. In translation it reads (with similarities of wording to *Ls.* bracketed):

Why is gold called 'Ægir's fire'? There is this story about it, that Ægir—as was said before—went as a guest to Ásgarðr, and when he was ready for the journey home, he invited Óðinn and all the Æsir to visit him after a space of three months. On that journey were first Óðinn and Njörðr, Freyr, Týr, Bragi, Víðarr, Loki; and also the Ásynjur Frigg, Freyja, Gefjun, Skaði, Íðunn, Sif. Pórr was not there. He had gone on the eastern road to kill trolls [*Pórr var eigi þar. Hann var farinn í austrveg at drepa troll*]. And when the gods had sat themselves in their seats, then Ægir had shining gold [*lýsigull*] brought inside onto the hall-floor, which illuminated and lit up the hall like fire, and it was used instead of lights [*ok þat var þar haft fyrir ljós*] at his feast, just as in Valhöll the swords took the place of fire. Then Loki wrangled [*senti*] with all the gods there and killed Ægir's slave, who was called Fimafengr. Another slave of his is called Eldir ... At the feast everything served itself, both food and ale and all the utensils that were needed for the feast.

How much earlier the prologue existed, we cannot say. But it is likely that its account of Loki's murder of Fimafengr, which is not mentioned in the poem, means that 'this whole prose piece is based on some older text, except only the obvious borrowings from *Lokasenna*'.² For its part, the epilogue appears to be drawn, ultimately at least, from a lost prose source also known to Snorri, though opinions differ about this. Again, we cannot determine its date.

The metre of *Ls.* is *ljóðahátt*, apart from four instances of the expanded form, *galdralag* (13, 54, 62 and 65), all spoken by Loki. These exceptions perhaps lend his words a magical potency.

² A. G. van Hamel, 'The Prose-Frame of Lokasenna', *Neophilologus* 14 (1929), 204–14 at 205.

Ls.'s position between *Hym.* and *Brk.* in R suggests that it was thought of as a Pórr-poem. And although *Ls.* is obviously Loki's tour de force, not Pórr's, it sits quite neatly there. For one thing, it apparently follows on logically from the events of *Hym.* For another, it provides an amusing prelude and contrast of mood to the light-hearted farce of *Brk.* It also establishes a theme of sexual transgression that foreshadows Loki's appearance as a woman and Freyja's reputed licentiousness, and shows the vital importance of Pórr's hammer.

But, for all its pungent comedy, *Ls.* is fundamentally different from its neighbours in the 'Pórr-group' in its underlying seriousness. For, unlike them, it appears to be an eschatological poem, set just before Ragnarok. That this point emerges only gradually makes it all the more telling. It pervades the poem as a tragic undertow, coming to the surface only intermittently: it informs Óðinn's decision to command Víðarr to give up his seat to Loki (10); it returns in the reference to Baldr's absence (death) and Loki's role in the thwarting of his resurrection (27–28); it is explicit in stt. 39, 41–42; it is the reason for Heimdallr's eternal wakefulness in st. 48; it is referred to in st. 58 (perhaps in st. 65, too); and finally it makes its presence felt in the prose epilogue.

Synopsis

Prose: A prologue sets the scene. Many of the gods—but not Pórr, who is away killing trolls—have gathered for a feast held by the giant Ægir, who now has the huge cauldron that once belonged to Hymir. The feast is held in a hall that was a place of sanctuary.

Loki, enraged at the gods' praise for Ægir's servants, kills the one called Fimafengr. The gods shout at Loki and chase him away to the woods, before returning to their drink. But Loki turns back and greets Eldir, Ægir's surviving manservant.

Verse: The poem begins with a tense exchange of words between Loki and Eldir outside the hall. During this, Loki reveals his intention to join the feast and bring discord to the gods, despite Eldir's warnings that he is unwelcome (1–5).

Loki enters the hall and everyone inside falls silent. He introduces himself, requests hospitality (6), and rebukes them for their silence (7). Bragi, the poet-god whose duty it may be to greet visitors, is first to reply: he refuses Loki a seat on behalf of the gods (8). Loki ignores Bragi and instead addresses Óðinn, the lord of the gods, reminding him of their blood-brotherhood and of his oath never to drink ale unless it were served to them both (9). His hand forced, Óðinn commands his son Víðarr to give up his place (10).

Having joined the feast, Loki proposes a toast to all the gods—except Bragi, whose insult he now has the chance to repay (11). In reply, Bragi offers Loki compensatory gifts, if he will refrain from angering the gods (12). Loki responds with the first accusation of a formal flying—that is, a series of one-on-one verbal duels:

Loki vs. Bragi (11–15): Loki, having spurned the offer, says Bragi will always lack treasure, since he is a coward in war; Bragi asserts that he would behead Loki if they were outside. Loki likens him to an ornament and challenges him to battle.

Intervention by Iðunn, Bragi's wife (16): She urges her husband not to insult Loki.

Loki vs. Iðunn (17–18): He accuses her of nymphomania and of sleeping with her brother's killer.

Intervention by Gefjun (19): She tries to defuse the situation by claiming that Loki is merely joking.

Loki vs. Gefjun (20): He accuses her of having been seduced by the 'white boy' (probably Heimdallr) who gave her a piece of jewellery (probably the Brísingamen).

Intervention by Óðinn (21): He calls Loki mad to anger Gefjun, since she knows the world's fate.

Loki vs. Óðinn (22–24): Loki accuses Óðinn of awarding victories unfairly; he, in turn, accuses Loki of sexual perversion in having been a milch-cow (or milkmaid) and a woman for eight years underground and in having given birth to children. Loki retorts that Óðinn was a seeress and a wandering wizard among men, which was again the sign of a pervert.

Intervention by Frigg, Óðinn's wife (25): She urges the two not to rake up past events.

Loki vs. Frigg (26–28): He accuses her of nymphomania and of having slept with Óðinn's brothers, Véi and Vili; she asserts that he would not escape if Baldr were there; he claims he is the reason she will never see Baldr again.

Intervention by Freyja (29): She calls Loki mad to speak like that, when Frigg knows all fates.

Loki vs. Freyja (30–32): He accuses her of having slept with all the assembled gods and elves; she denies this and says his tongue will hurt him one day; he reveals that the gods caught her having sex with her brother (Freyr).

Intervention by Njørðr (33): He declares it a small matter if a woman has several male partners, but an outrage that a male god who has given birth should be at the feast.

Loki vs. Njørðr (34–36): Loki recalls that Njørðr was sent as a hostage to the gods and that the daughters of the giant Hymir pissed in his mouth. Njørðr does not deny this, but takes comfort in his son (Freyr), who is loved by all; Loki discloses that the child's mother was Njørðr's sister.

Intervention by Týr (37): He praises Freyr's virtues.

Loki vs. Týr (37–40): Loki taunts Týr with the accusation that he can never make a fair peace between men, and that Fenrir bit off his right hand. Týr reminds him that Loki is also missing something: Hróðrsvitnir (Fenrir), who lies bound until Ragnarok. Loki retorts that he fathered a son on Týr's wife, and that Týr has received nothing in compensation.

Loki vs. Freyr (41–42): Freyr speaks up. He too refers to Fenrir's bondage, and warns Loki to keep quiet unless he wants to be bound next to him. Loki says Freyr bought Gymir's daughter (the giantess Gerðr) and gave away his sword, and so will be powerless when Muspell's sons ride against the gods at Ragnarok.

Loki vs. Byggvir (43–46): Freyr's servant Byggvir, a barley-spirit, says that if his lineage were as noble as Freyr's, he would grind Loki like grain and tear him apart. Loki mocks him, apparently by likening him to a small twittering bird by a millstone. In reply, Byggvir takes pride in his contribution to the feast's ale. Loki criticizes Byggvir's ability to share out food and brands him a cowardly absentee whenever fights break out.

Loki vs. Heimdallr (47–48): Heimdallr upbraids Loki for drunkenness and reminds him of the power of alcohol over those inclined to talk too much. Loki's comeback is to highlight Heimdallr's unenviable lot in having to stay continually on watch with a muddy (or aching) back.

Loki vs. Skaði (49–52): The giantess Skaði warns that Loki's fun will not last long, as the gods will bind him on a cliff-edge(?) with the guts of his son. Loki replies that he was foremost at the killing of her father, Þjazi—a claim that gets a frosty reply. Loki ends their exchange with an assertion that Skaði spoke more sweetly when she invited him to her bed.

Loki vs. Sif (53–54): Sif gives Loki a mead-cup in a vain bid to stop him attacking her character. He drinks the mead, but accuses her of being anything but cold towards men, and of having betrayed her husband, Þórr, with him.

Loki vs. Beyla, Byggvir's wife (55–56): She hears Þórr returning and asserts that he will silence Loki. In reply, Loki calls her a shitty dairymaid.

Þórr arrives.

Loki vs. Þórr (57–64): Þórr threatens to behead Loki with his hammer. Loki asks him why he is so angry and claims Þórr will not be daring when he has to fight Fenrir after Óðinn's death. Þórr threatens to throw him eastwards. Loki accuses Þórr of having cowered in the glove of a giant when in the east. Þórr threatens to crush Loki with his hammer. Loki retorts that Þórr could not even manage to get at the food in the giant Skrýmir's bag. Þórr threatens to send Loki to Hel with his hammer. Loki says he will leave, because he knows Þórr will strike.

Loki's final words are a curse on Ægir and his possessions, one that perhaps anticipates the fires of Ragnarok (65).

Prose: An epilogue tells how Loki then took the form of a salmon and hid in a waterfall. But the gods caught him and bound him with the intestines of his son Nari (another son, Narfi, had turned into a wolf). Skaði suspended a snake above Loki's face, and Sigyn, his wife, sat by him catching the dripping venom in a basin. But when she went to empty it, the poison fell on to Loki, making him writhe and cause earthquakes.

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Frá Ægi ok Goðum

Ægir, er qđru nafni hét Gymir, hann hafði búit Ásum ql, þá er hann hafði fengit ketil inn mikla, sem nú er sagt.

Til þeirar veizlu kom Óðinn ok Frigg, kona hans. Þórr kom eigi, þvíat hann var í austrvegi. Sif var þar, kona Þórs, Bragi ok Iðunn, kona hans. Týr var einhendr: Fenrisúlfr sleit hqnd af honum, þá er hann var bundinn. Þar var Njörðr ok kona hans, Skaði, Freyr ok Freyja, Víðarr, son Óðins. Loki var þar, ok þjónustumenn Freys, Byggvir ok Beyla. Mart var þar Ása ok álfa.

Ægir átti tvá þjónustumenn, Fimafengr ok Eldir. Þar var lýsigull haft fyrir eldsljós. Sjálft barsk þar ql. Þar var griðastaðr mikill. Menn lofuðu mjók, hversu góðir þjónustumenn Ægis váru. Loki mátti eigi heyra þat, ok drap hann Fimafeng.

Þá skóku Æsir skjoldu sína ok cepðu at Loka, ok eltu hann braut til skógar, en þeir fóru at drekka. Loki hvarf aptr ok hitti úti Eldi.

Loki kvaddi hann:

Lokasenna

1. 'Segðu þat, Eldir, svá at þú einugi
feti gangir framarr:
hvat hér inni hafa at qlmálum
sigtíva synir?'

Eldir kvað:

2. 'Of vápn sín doema ok um vígrisni sína
sigtíva synir;
Ása ok álfa er hér inni eru,
mangi er þér í orði vinr!'

Loki kvað:

3. 'Inn skal ganga Ægis hallir í
á þat sumbl at sjá;
jöll ok áfu færi ek Ása sonum,
ok blend ek þeim svá meini mjóð!'

Eldir kvað:

4. 'Veiztu, ef þú inn gengr Ægis hallir í,
á þat sumbl at sjá,
hrópi ok rógi ef þú eyss á holl regin,
á þér munu þau þerra þat!'

Loki kvað:

5. 'Veiztu þat, Eldir, ef vit einir skulum
sáryrðum sakask,
auðigr verða mun ek í andsvorum,
ef þú mælir til mart!'

About Ægir and the Gods¹

Ægir,² who by another name was called Gymir,³ had brewed ale for the Æsir,⁴ after he had received the great cauldron, as has now been said.⁵

To that feast came Óðinn and Frigg, his wife. Þórr did not come, because he was on the east-way.⁶ Sif, Þórr's wife, was there, and Bragi and Iðunn, his wife.⁷ Týr was there. He was one-handed: Fenrisúlfr⁸ bit off his hand when he was bound.⁹ Njörðr was there, as was his wife, Skaði,¹⁰ Freyr and Freyja, [and] Víðarr, Óðinn's son. Loki was there, and Freyr's servants, Byggvir and Beyla.¹¹ Many of the Æsir and elves were there.¹²

Ægir had two serving-men, Fimafengr and Eldir.¹³ Shining gold was used there instead of firelight.¹⁴ Ale served itself there.¹⁵ It was a great place of sanctuary.¹⁶ People were full of praise for how good Ægir's serving-men were. Loki could not bear to hear that, and he slew Fimafengr.¹⁷

Then the Æsir shook their shields and screamed at Loki, and chased him away to the forest, and they went to drink. Loki turned back and met Eldir outside.

Loki greeted him:

Loki's Flyting

1. 'Tell [me] this,¹⁸ Eldir, before you take
another step forward:
what do the sons of the victory-gods¹⁹
have as their ale-talk inside here?'

Eldir said:

2. 'The sons of the victory-gods converse about their weapons
and their battle-prowess,²⁰
of the Æsir and elves who are in here,
not one is a friend to you in words!²¹'

Loki said:

3. 'I shall go inside, into Ægir's halls
to gaze upon that feast;
discord and dissension²² I'll bring to the sons of the Æsir,
and thus I'll mix their mead with harm!²³'

Eldir said:

4. 'Know [this, that] if you go inside, into Ægir's halls
to gaze upon that feast,
if you pour slander and scorn on the gracious powers,
they'll wipe it off on you!'

Loki said:

5. 'Know this, Eldir, if we two alone
shall argue with wounding words,
I shall be rich in answers,
if you talk too much!'

Síðan gekk Loki inn í hóllina. En er þeir sá, er fyrir váru, hverninn var kominn, þognuðu þeir allir.

Loki kvað:

6. 'Pyrstr ek kom þessar hallar til,
Loptr, um langan veg,
Ásu at biðja at mér einn gefi
mæran drykk mjáðar.'

7. 'Hví þegið ér svá, þrungin goð,
at þér mæla né meguð?
Sessa ok staði velið mér sumbli at,
eða heitið mik heðan!'

Bragi kvað:

8. 'Sessa ok staði velja þér sumbli at
Æsir aldregi,
þvíat Æsir vitu hveim þeir alda skulu
gambansumbl um geta!'

Loki kvað:

9. 'Mantu þat, Óðinn, er vit í árdaga
blendum blóði saman?
Olvi bergja léztu eigi mundu,
nema okkr væri báðum borit!'

Óðinn kvað:

10. 'Rístu þá, Víðarr, ok lát úlfs foður
sitja sumbli at,
síðr oss Loki kveði lastastfum
Ægis hóllu í!'

Þá stóð Víðarr upp ok skenkti Loka. En áðr hann drykki, kvaddi hann Ásuna:

11. 'Heilir Æsir, heilar Ásynjur
ok öll ginnheilug goð,
nema sá einn Áss er innar sitr,
Bragi, bekkjum á!'

Bragi kvað:

12. 'Mar ok mæki gef ek þér míns fjár,
ok boetir þér svá baugi Bragi,
síðr þú Ásum qfund um gjaldir;
gremðu eigi goð at þér!'

Then Loki went into the hall. And when those who were there saw who had come in, they all fell silent.

Loki said:

6. ‘Thirsty, I came to this hall,
Loptr,²⁴ from a long way off,
to ask the Æsir to give me
one magnificent drink of mead.

7. ‘Why are you so silent, puffed-up²⁵ gods,
that you cannot speak?
Select a seat and a place for me at the feast,
or order me out of here!’

Bragi said:²⁶

8. ‘A seat and a place at the feast
the Æsir will never select for you,
because the Æsir know the type of people they should
provide a tribute(?) -feast²⁷ for!’

Loki said:

9. ‘Do you recall it, Óðinn, when in ancient days
we two blended blood together?²⁸
You said you wouldn’t taste ale,
unless it were brought to us both!’

Óðinn said:

10. ‘Arise, then, Víðarr, and let the wolf’s father²⁹
sit at the feast,
lest Loki address us with insulting words³⁰
in Ægir’s hall!³¹

Then Víðarr stood up and poured for Loki. But before he³² drank, he toasted the Æsir:

11. ‘Hail Æsir, hail Ásynjur³³
and all the most holy gods,
except for that one Áss³⁴ who sits further in,
Bragi, on the benches!³⁵

Bragi said:

12. ‘I shall give you a steed and a sword from my treasure,
and Bragi will also recompense you with a ring,³⁶
lest you requite the Æsir with ill-will,³⁷
don’t make the gods angry at you!’

Loki kvað:

13. 'Jós ok armbaugu mundu æ vera
 beggja vanr, Bragi;
 Ása ok álfa er hér inni eru,
 þú ert við víg varastr
 ok skjarrastr við skot!'

Bragi kvað:

14. 'Veit ek, ef fyr útan værak, svá sem fyr innan emk
 Ægis höll um kominn,
 höfud þitt bæra ek í hendi mér;
 lít er þér þat fyr lygi!'

Loki kvað:

15. 'Snjallr ertu í sessi, skalattu svá góra,
 Bragi bekkskrautuðr;
 vega þú gakk ef þú vreiðr sér —
 hyggsk vætr hvatr fyrir!'

Iðunn kvað:

16. 'Bið ek, Bragi — barna sifjar duga
 ok allra óskmaga —
 at þú Loka kveðira lastastófum
 Ægis höllu í!'

Loki kvað:

17. 'Pegiðu, Iðunn! Þik kveð ek allra kvenna
 vergjarnasta vera,
 síztu arma þína lagðir ítrþvegna
 um þinn bróðurbana!'

Iðunn kvað:

18. 'Loka ek kveðka lastastófum
 Ægis höllu í;
 Braga ek kyrri bjórreifan,
 vilkat ek, at it vreiðir vegisk!'

Gefjun kvað:

19. 'Hví it Aesir tveir skuluð inni hér
 sáryrðum sakask?
 Lopzki þat veit, at hann leikinn er
 ok hann fjørg ðoll frjá?'

Loki kvað:

20. 'Pegi þú, Gefjun! Þess mun ek nú geta
 er þik glapði at geði,
 sveinn inn hvíti er þér sigli gaf,
 ok þú lagðir lær yfir!'

13. Loki said:
‘Of horse and arm-rings you’ll
 always be in want, Bragi;
of the Æsir and elves who are in here
 you’re the wariest of war
 and the shyest of shots!’³⁸

14. Bragi said:
‘I know, if I were outside,³⁹ as surely as I’ve come
 inside Ægir’s hall,⁴⁰
 your head I’d bear in my hand;
that’s little for you [to pay] for lying!’⁴¹

15. Loki said:
‘You’re bold in your seat, [but] you shan’t act thus,
 Bragi Bench-Ornament;
you come and do battle if you’re irate⁴² —
 a brave man balks at nothing!’⁴³

16. Iðunn said:
‘I ask, Bragi — the ties of blood-children
 and of all adopted sons are strong —
that you don’t address Loki with insulting staves⁴⁴
 in Ægir’s hall!’⁴⁵

17. Loki said:
‘Silence, Iðunn! I say that of all women
 you’re the most man-eager,⁴⁶
since you laid your splendidly washed arms
 around your brother’s slayer!’⁴⁷

18. Iðunn said:
‘I shan’t address Loki with insulting staves
 in Ægir’s hall;
I’ll calm Bragi, [who’s] high on beer,
 I don’t want you two wrathful ones to fight!’⁴⁸

19. Gefjun said.⁴⁹
‘Why must you two Æsir⁵⁰ argue inside here
 with wounding words?
Isn’t it well known that Loptr has a playful nature⁵¹
 and that all the living⁵² love him?’⁵³

20. Loki said:
‘Silence, Gefjun! Now I’ll speak of the one
 who lured you into lust,⁵⁴
the white boy who gave you a pendant,⁵⁵
 and [whom] you put your thigh over!’⁵⁶

Óðinn kvað:

21. 'Err ertu, Loki, ok ørviti,
er þú fær þér Gefjun at gremi,
þvíat aldar ørlög hygg ek at hon oll um viti
jafngorla sem ek!'

Loki kvað:

22. 'Pegi þú, Óðinn! Þú kunnir aldregi
deila víg með verum;
opt þú gaft þeim er þú gefa skyldira,
inum slævurum, sigr!'

Óðinn kvað:

23. 'Veiztu, ef ek gaf, þeim er ek gefa né skylda,
inum slævurum, sigr,
átta vetr vartu fyr jörð neðan
kýr mólkandi ok kona,
ok hefir þú þar býrn borit,
ok hugða ek þat args aðal!'

Loki kvað:

24. 'En þík síga kóðu Sámseyju í,
ok draptu á vett sem volur;
vitka líki fórtu verbjóð yfir,
ok hugða ek þat args aðal!'

Frigg kvað:

25. 'Ørlögum ykkrum skylið aldregi
segja seggjum frá,
hvati t Æsir tveir drygðuð í árdaga;
firrisk æ forn rök firar!'

Loki kvað:

26. 'Pegi þú, Frigg! Þú ert Fjørgyns mær
ok hefir æ vergjorn verit,
er þá Véa ok Vilja léztu þér, Viðris kvæn,
báða í baðm um tekit!'

Frigg kvað:

27. 'Veiztu, ef ek inni ættak, Ægis hóllum í
Baldri líkan bur,
út þú né kvæmir frá Ása sonum,
ok væri þá at þér vreiðum vegit!'

Óðinn said:

21. 'You're mad, Loki, and out of your mind,⁵⁷
when you rouse Gefjun to anger against you,⁵⁸
because I think she knows all the world's fate
just as well as I!⁵⁹

Loki said:

22. 'Silence, Óðinn! You never knew how
to share out battles among men;
often you gave to those you shouldn't have given,
to the less valiant, victory!⁶⁰

Óðinn said:

23. 'Know [this, that] if I gave to those I shouldn't have given,
to the less valiant, victory,
you were eight winters beneath the earth
[as] a milch-cow and a woman,⁶¹
and you've given birth to children there,⁶²
and I considered that the essence of a pervert!⁶³

Loki said:

24. 'But you, they said, sank [down]⁶⁴ in Sámsey,⁶⁵
and struck a drum(?) as seeresses do;⁶⁶
in wizard's shape you went among⁶⁷ mankind,
and I considered that the essence of a pervert!⁶⁸

Frigg said:

25. 'You two should never tell people⁶⁹
about your fates,⁷⁰
of what you two Æsir⁷¹ did in ancient days;
let the living always distance themselves from old destinies!⁷²

Loki said:

26. 'Silence, Frigg! You're Fjørgynn's daughter,⁷³
and have always been man-eager,
since, Viðrir's⁷⁴ wife, you took both
Véi and Vili⁷⁵ in your embrace!

Frigg said:

27. 'Know [this, that] if I had inside, in Ægir's halls,
a boy like Baldr,⁷⁶
you wouldn't escape⁷⁷ from the sons of the Æsir,
and you'd then be fought by furious ones!⁷⁸

Loki kvað:

28. 'ENN vill þú, Frigg, at ek fleiri telja
mína meinstafi?
Ek því réð, er þú ríða sérat
síðan Baldr at solum!'

Freyja kvað:

29. 'Œrr ertu, Loki, er þú yðra telr
ljóta leiðstafi;
ørlög Frigg hygg ek at qll viti,
þótt hon sjálfgi segi!'

Loki kvað:

30. 'Pegi þú, Freyja! Þik kann ek fullgervia,
era þér vamma vant;
Ása ok álfa er hér inni eru,
hvorr hefir þinn hór verit!'

Freyja kvað:

31. 'Flá er þér tunga! Hygg ek at þér fremr myni
ógott um gala;
reiðir ru þér Æsir ok Ásynjur,
hryggr muntu heim fara!'

Loki kvað:

32. 'Pegi þú, Freyja! Þú ert fordæða
ok meini blandin mjök,
síztik at brœðr þínum stóðu blíð regin,
ok mundir þú þá, Freyja, frata!'

Njørðr kvað:

33. 'Þat er válítit, þótt sér varðir vers fái,
hós eða hvárs;
hitt er undr er Áss ragr er hér inn of kominn,
ok hefir sá børn of borit!'

Loki kvað:

34. 'Pegi þú, Njørðr! Þú vart austr heðan
gísl um sendr at goðum;
Hymis meyar hófðu þik at hlandtrogi
ok þér í munni migu!'

Njørðr kvað:

35. 'Sú erumk líkn, er ek vark langt heðan
gísl um sendr at goðum;
þá ek mog gat, þann er mangi fjár,
ok þíkkir sá Ása jaðarr!'

Loki *kvað*:

36. 'Hættu nú, Njörðr, haf þú á hófi þik!
 Munka ek því leyna lengr:
 við systur þinni gaztu slíkan móg,
 ok era þó ónu verr!'

Týr *kvað*:

37. 'Freyr er beztr allra ballriða
 Ása góðum í;
 mey hann né grætir, né manns konu,
 ok leysir ór höptum hvern!'

Loki *kvað*:

38. 'Pegi þú, Týr! Þú kunnir aldregi
 bera tilt með tveim;
 handar innar hoegri mun ek hennar geta,
 er þér sleit Fenrir frá!'

Tyr *kvað*:

39. 'Handar em ek vanr, en þú Hróðrsvitnis,
 bol er beggja þrá;
 úlfgi hefir ok vel, er í böndum skal
 bíða ragna røkrs!'

Loki *kvað*:

40. 'Pegi þú, Týr! Þat varð þinni konu
 at hon átti móg við mér;
 qln né penning hafðir þú þess aldregi
 vanréttis, vesall!'

Freyr *kvað*:

41. 'Úlf sé ek liggja árósi fyrir,
 unz rjúfask regin;
 því mundu næst, nema þú nú þegir,
 bundinn, bølvasmíðr!'

Loki *kvað*:

42. 'Gulli keypta léztu Gymis dóttur,
 ok seldir þitt svá sverð;
 en er Muspells synir ríða Myrkvið yfir,
 veizta þú þá, vesall, hvé þú vegr!'

Byggvir *kvað*:

43. 'Veiztu, ef ek øðli ættak sem Ingunar-Freyr,
 ok svá sæl/likt setr,
 mergi smæra mólða ek þá meinkráku
 ok lemða alla í liðu!'

Loki kvað:

44. 'Hvat er þat it litla er ek löggra sék
ok snapvíst snapir?
At eyrum Freys muntu æ vera,
ok und kvernum klaka!'

Byggvir kvað:

45. 'Byggvir ek heiti, en mik bráðan kveða
goð oll ok gumar;
því em ek hér hróðugr, at drekka Hropts megin
allir ól saman!'

Loki kvað:

46. 'Pegi þú, Byggvir! Pú kunnir aldregi
deila með mórrnum mat;
ok þik í flets strá finna né máttu,
þá er vágur varar!'

Heimdallr kvað:

47. 'Ólr ertu, Loki, svá at þú ert ørviti,
hví né lezkaðu, Loki?
Þvát ofdrykkja veldr alda hveim,
er sína mælgji né manað!'

Loki kvað:

48. 'Pegi þú, Heimdallr! Þér var í árdaga
it ljóta líf um lagit;
aurgu baki þú munt æ vera,
ok vaka vørðr goða!'

Skaði kvað:

49. 'Létt er þér, Loki, munattu lengi svá
leika lausum hala,
þvíat þik á hjørvi skulu ins hrímkalda magar
görnum binda goð!'

Loki kvað:

50. 'Veiztu, ef mik á hjørvi skulu ins hrímkalda magar
görnum binda goð;
fyrstr ok øfstr var ek at fjørlagi,
þars vér á Þjaza þrifum!'

Skaði kvað:

51. 'Veiztu, ef fyrstr ok øfstr vartu at fjørlagi,
þá er ér á Þjaza þrifuð;
frá mínum véum ok vøngum skulu
þér æ kold ráð koma!'

44. 'What's that little thing¹¹³ which I see wagging its tail¹¹⁴
and snappily snapping?¹¹⁵
At Freyr's ears you'll always be,
and under quern-stones chattering!¹¹⁶

45. Byggvir said:
'I'm called Byggvir,¹¹⁷ and all gods and men
declare me nimble;¹¹⁸
I'm proud of this here, that Hropr's sons¹¹⁹
all drink ale together!'¹²⁰

46. Loki said:
'Silence, Byggvir! You never knew how to
share out food among men,¹²¹
and they couldn't find you in the floor's¹²² straw
when men were fighting!'¹²³

47. Heimdallr said:
'You're drunk, Loki, so that you've lost your wits,
why don't you control yourself, Loki?
Because, for every man, excess drinking ensures
that he doesn't recall his prattling!'

48. Loki said:
'Silence, Heimdallr! In early days
the loathsome life was allotted to you;
with a muddy back¹²⁴ you'll always be,
and stay awake as the gods' warder!'¹²⁵

49. Skaði said:
'You're in a light mood, Loki, [but] you won't wag
your tail freely like this for long,¹²⁶
because the gods shall bind you on a cliff-edge(?)¹²⁷
with the guts of your frost-cold son!'¹²⁸

50. Loki said:
'Know [this], if the gods shall bind me on a cliff-edge
with the guts of my frost-cold son;
I was first and last at the life-loss,¹²⁹
when we laid hands on Þjazi!'¹³⁰

51. Skaði said:
'Know this, if first and last you were at the life-loss,
when you laid hands on Þjazi;
from my sanctuaries and fields
cold counsels shall always come to you!'

Loki kvað:

52. 'Léttari í málum vartu við Laufeyjar son,
þá er þú létz mér á beð þinn boðit;
getit verðr oss slíks, ef vér gørva skulum
telja vómmín vár!'

Þá gekk *Sif* fram ok byrlaði Loka í hrímkálki mjøð, ok mælti:

53. 'Heill ver þú nú, Loki, ok tak við hrímkálki,
fullum forns mjaðar,
heldr þú hana eina látir með Ása sonum
vammalausa vera!'

Hann tók við horni ok drakk af:

54. 'Ein þú værir, ef þú svá værir,
vør ok grøm at veri;
einn ek veit, svá at ek vita þíkkjumk,
hór ok af Hlórriða,
ok var þat sá inn lævísi Loki!'

Beyla kvað:

55. 'Fjöll ɔll skjálfa, hygg ek á fór vera
heiman Hlórriða;
hann ræðr ró þeim er rægir hér
goð ɔll ok guma!'

Loki kvað:

56. 'Þegi þú, Beyla! Pú ert Byggvis kvæn
ok meini blandin mjók;
ókynjan meira koma með Ása sonum —
ɔll ertu, deigja, dritin!'

Þá kom Þórr at ok kvað:

57. 'Þegi þú, rög vaetr! Pér skal minn þrúðhamarr,
Mjöllnir, mál fyrnema;
herða klett drepp ek þér hálsi af,
ok verðr þá þínu fjørvi um farit!'

Loki kvað:

58. 'Jarðar *burr* er hér nú inn kominn —
hví þrasir þú svá, Þórr?
En þá þorir þú ekki, er þú skalt við úlfinn vega,
ok svelgr hann allan Sigfǫður!'

Loki said:

52. 'You were lighter in speech to Laufey's son¹³¹
 when you had me bidden to your bed;¹³²
 such a matter must be mentioned by us,
 if we're fully to count our faults!'

Then Sif¹³³ came forward and poured [mead] for Loki into a frost-cup,¹³⁴ and said:

53. 'Hail to you now, Loki, and take the frost-cup
 full of ancient mead,¹³⁵
 [so] you may the sooner declare her¹³⁶ alone among the Æsir's sons
 to be free from fault!'

He took a horn¹³⁷ and drained it:

54. 'Alone you'd be, if¹³⁸ you were thus,
 wary and wrathful towards a man;
 I know one [man] — at least, I think I know this —
 a lover [you had], even at Hlórriði's expense,¹³⁹
 and that was the crafty Loki!'¹⁴⁰

Beyla said:

55. 'All the mountains are shaking, I think Hlórriði's
 on his journey from home,¹⁴¹
 he'll force silence on the one who here defames
 all gods and men!'

Loki said:

56. 'Silence, Beyla! You're Byggvir's wife¹⁴²
 and shot-through with sinister power;¹⁴³
 a more monstrous thing hasn't come among the sons of the Æsir —
 you, dairymaid,¹⁴⁴ are all shit-spattered!'¹⁴⁵

Then Pórr arrived and said:

57. 'Silence, perverted creature!¹⁴⁶ My power-hammer,
 Mjöllnir, shall deprive you of speech;
 I'll knock the crag of the shoulders¹⁴⁷ off your neck,
 and then your life will be gone!'

Loki said:

58. 'Jörð's son¹⁴⁸ has now come in here —
 why are you so aggressive, Pórr?
 But you won't be daring then, when you ought to¹⁴⁹ fight against the wolf,¹⁵⁰
 and he¹⁵¹ swallows Sigfaðir¹⁵² whole!'

Pórr kvað:

59. 'Pegi þú, rög vættr! Þér skal minn þrúðhamarr,
 Mjöllnir, mál fyrnema;
 upp ek þér verp ok á austrvega,
 síðan þik mangi sér!'

Loki kvað:

60. 'Austrfórum þínum skaltu aldregi
 segja seggjum frá,
 sízt í hanzka þumlungi hnúkðir þú, einheri,
 ok þóttiska þú þá Pórr vera!'

Pórr kvað:

61. 'Pegi þú, rög vættr! Þér skal minn þrúðhamarr,
 Mjöllnir, mál fyrnema;
 hendi inni hoegri drep ek þik Hrungnis bana,
 svá at þér brotnar beina hvat!'

Loki kvað:

62. 'Lifa ætla ek mér langan aldr,
 þóttu hoetir hamri mér;
 skarpar álar þóttu þér Skrýmis vera,
 ok máttira þú þá nesti ná,
 ok svaltz þú þá hungri, heill!'

Pórr kvað:

63. 'Pegi þú, rög vættr! Þér skal minn þrúðhamarr,
 Mjöllnir, mál fyrnema;
 Hrungnis bani mun þér í Hel koma,
 fyr nágindr neðan!'

Loki kvað:

64. 'Kvað ek fyr Ásum, kvað ek fyr Ása sonum,
 þats mik hvatti hugr;
 en fyr þér einum mun ek út ganga,
 þvíat ek veit at þú vegr!'

65. 'Ol gørðir þú, Ægir, en þú aldri munt
 síðan sumbl um gøra;
 eiga þín qll, er hér inni er,
 leiki yfir logi,
 ok brenni þér á baki!'

Þórr said:

59. 'Silence, perverted creature! My power-hammer,
Mjøllnir, shall deprive you of speech;
I'll hurl you up and onto the east-way,¹⁵³
No one will see you again!'

Loki said:

60. 'Your eastern journeys you ought never
to tell people about,
since, unique champion,¹⁵⁴ you cowered in the thumb of a glove,
and you didn't seem to be Þórr then!'¹⁵⁵

Þórr said:

61. 'Silence, perverted creature! My power-hammer,
Mjøllnir, shall deprive you of speech;
with my right hand I'll strike you with Hrungnir's slayer,¹⁵⁶
so that all your bones will be broken!'

Loki said:

62. 'For myself, I intend to live a long life,
though you threaten me with your hammer;
Skrýmir's straps seemed hard to you,
and you couldn't get your supplies¹⁵⁷ then,
and you were dying of hunger, [though] healthy!'¹⁵⁸

Þórr said:

63. 'Silence, perverted creature! My power-hammer,
Mjøllnir, shall deprive you of speech;
Hrungnir's slayer will send you to Hel,¹⁵⁹
down below corpse-gates!'¹⁶⁰

Loki said:

64. 'I have said before the Æsir, I have said before the sons of the Æsir,
that which my disposition incited me to;
but for you alone will I go out,
because I know that you attack!'

65. 'Ale you have brewed, Ægir, but never again
will you prepare a feast;
may flame¹⁶¹ play¹⁶² over all your possessions
which are inside here,
and burn you on the back!'

Frá Loka

En eptir þetta falsk Loki í Fránangrsforsi í laxlíki. Þar tóku *Æsir* hann.

Hann var bundinn með þórmum sonar Nara. En Narfi, sonr hans, varð at vargi. Skaði tók eitorm ok festi upp yfir andlit Loka. Draup þar ór eitr. Sigyn, kona Loka, sat þar ok helt munnlaug undir eitrit. En er munnlugin var full bar hon út eitrit, en meðan draup eitrit á Loka. Þá kipptisk hann svá hart við, at þaðan af skalf jorð qll; þat eru nú kallaðir landskjálptar.

About Loki¹⁶³

And after that Loki hid in Fránangrsfors¹⁶⁴ in salmon-form. There the *Æsir* caught him.¹⁶⁵

He was bound with the intestines of his son, Nari.¹⁶⁶ But Narfi,¹⁶⁷ his son, turned into a wolf.¹⁶⁸ Skaði took a venomous snake and fastened it up over Loki's face. Venom dripped from it there. Sigyn, Loki's wife, sat there and held a hand-basin under the venom. But when the hand-basin was full she carried the venom away, and meanwhile the venom dripped on Loki.¹⁶⁹ Then he writhed at that so hard that all the earth shook; these [tremors] are now called earthquakes.¹⁷⁰

Textual Apparatus to *Lokasenna*

Frá Ægi ok goðum] A rubricated heading, but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; the reading is therefore taken from the transcription therein. Some later, paper manuscripts have *Ægisdrekka Ægir's Drinking-Feast*.

Ægir] The first letter is a large, rubricated, lightly ornamented and inset E in R

nafni] R *nafi*

Byggvir] R *BeyGvir* (cf. 45/1)

kvaddi] R *qvadi*

Lokasenna] A rubricated heading, but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; the reading is therefore taken from the transcription therein. Some later, paper manuscripts have *Lokaglepsa* 'Loki's Diatribe'.

1/1 *Segðu]* The first letter is large and rubricated, but faded, in R

2 *Eldir kvað]* R *e.* in margin. Probably originally *e.q.*, for *Eldir qvað*, but the edge of the leaf is lost. Many of the speech directions in Ls. were damaged or lost when the pages were trimmed.

3/4 *joll]* R *ioll*, apparently following an erasure of the underdotted letters *hrop* (cf. *hrópi* in 4/3)

9 *Loki kvað]* These words are not present in R; however, they probably were written in the margin before it was trimmed—like many other missing speaker directions for subsequent stanzas

10 *Óðinn kvað]* R absent

12 *Bragi kvað]* R absent

13 *Loki kvað]* Only *q*, for *qvað*, remains in R

eru] The erased letters *mang* follow this word in R; evidently the scribe had begun to repeat the second half of Ls. 2

14 *Bragi kvað]* Only *q*, for *qvað*, remains in R

14/1 *fyr]* R *þyr*

14/6 *er]* R *ec* (i.e. *ek* 'I')

14/6 *er]* R *ec* (i.e. *ek* 'I')

15 *Loki kvað]* Only *q*, for *qvað*, remains in R

15/5 *vreiðr]* R *reiðr*

16 *Iðunn kvað]* Only *q*, for *qvað*, remains in R

17 *Loki kvað]* Only *q*, for *qvað*, remains in R

18 *Iðunn kvað]* Only *q*, for *qvað*, remains in R

19 *Gefjun kvað]* Only *q*, for *qvað*, remains in R

19/6 *fjörg qll]* R *fiorgvall*

20 *Loki kvað]* Only *q*, for *qvað*, remains in R

- 21 *Óðinn kvað*] Crossed þ abbreviation in R
- 22 *Loki kvað*] Only q, for *qvað*, remains in R
- 23 *Óðinn kvað*] Only q, for *qvað*, remains in R
- 23/7 *børn*] R absent
- 24 *Loki kvað*] Only a fragmentary q, for *qvað*, remains in R
- 25 *Frigg kvað*] R absent
- 25/4 *tveir*] R ii.
- 26 *Loki kvað*] R absent
- 27 *Frigg kvað*] R absent
- 28 *Loki kvað*] R absent
- 29 *Freyja kvað*] R absent
- 29/5 *hygg*] R *hvg*
- 30 *Loki kvað*] R absent
- 31 *Freyja kvað*] R absent
- 31/2 *hygg*] R *hyG*
- 31/2 *myni*] R *mý*
- 32 *Loki kvað*] Only a fragmentary l remains in R
- 32/4 *síztik*] R *sitztv*
- 32/5 *stóðu*] R *sípo*
- 33 *Njörðr kvað*] Only a fragmentary n remains in R
- 34 *Loki kvað*] Only a fragmentary l remains in R
- 34/3 *gísl*] R *gils*
- 35 *Njörðr kvað*] n. in R
- 36 *Loki kvað*] l. in R
- 36/6 *era*] R þera with þ underdotted for deletion
- 36/6 *verr*] R *yeR*
- 37 *Týr kvað*] t. in R
- 38 *Loki kvað*] l. in R
- 38/5 *hennar*] R *hiNar*
- 39 *Tyr kvað*] t. in R
- 39/5 *bondum*] R *bondom*
- 40 *Loki kvað*] l. in R
- 41 *Freyr kvað*] Abbreviation for *fre* in R

42 *Loki kvað*] *l.* in **R**

43 *Byggvir kvað*] Only *ByGvir* in **R**, as part of the main text

43/3 *sællikt*] **R** *sællict*

44 *Loki kvað*] Only a fragmentary *l* remains in **R**

44/2 *er ek*] **R** *er ec þat*, probably influenced by *er þat* in the preceding half-line

45 *Byggvir kvað*] **R** absent

45/1 *Byggvir*] **R** *BeyGvir* (cf. prose prologue)

46 *Loki kvað*] **R** absent

47 *Heimdallr kvað*] **R** absent

47/1 *ert*] **R** *er*

48 *Loki kvað*] **R** absent

49 *Skaði kvað*] **R** absent

49/4 *skulu*] Preceded by the erasure of *ii* (the second underdotted) in **R**

50 *Loki kvað*] **R** absent

51 *Skaði kvað*] **R** absent

52 *Loki kvað*] **R** absent

52 prose *Sif*] **R** absent; the scribe omitted this name, noticed his mistake and put a sign of omission after *gecc* (*gekk*); presumably he wrote *Sif* in the margin, but the word was lost when the leaf was trimmed

53/6 *vammalausa*] **R** *vamma lausom* (-*m* is a macron abbreviation)

55 *Beyla kvað*] **R** absent

56 *Loki kvað*] **R** absent

58 *Loki kvað*] **R** absent

58/1 *burr*] **R** absent

59 *pórr kvað*] **R** absent

59/1–3] Abbreviated *þegi þ. r. v. þ^{er}* in **R**

60 *Loki kvað*] **R** absent

60/6 *þóttiska*] **R** *þóttis* followed by two erased or eroded letters

61 *pórr kvað*] **R** absent

61/1–3] Abbreviated *þegi þ. r. v. in R*

62 *Loki kvað*] **R** absent

63 *pórr kvað*] **R** absent

63/1–3] Abbreviated *þegi þv. r. v. þ^{er}* in **R**

63 *Loki kvað]* R absent

Frá Loka] Illegible in the facsimile volume of R; this reading is taken from the transcription therein, where it is bracketed

final prose *landskjálptar]* R *landscliptar*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 Another version of the events described in the following prose prologue appears in *SnEskáld* (I, 33, pp. 40–41), where it explains why gold is called ‘Ægir’s fire’.
- 2 The sea-giant; see *Hym*.
- 3 Cf. *SnEskáld* (I, 25, p. 37). Gymir is the father of Gerðr, Freyr’s future wife, in *Ls.* 42, *Hdl.* 30 and *FSk*.
- 4 In *Ls.* a term for all the gods, including the Vanir.
- 5 In *Hym*.
- 6 I.e., in the east slaying giants or trolls, as stated in the related passage in *SnEskáld* (I, 33, p. 40). *Ls.* 55 possibly contradicts these accounts by describing Þórr travelling to the feast *heiman* ‘from home’; cf. *Hrbl.* 3.
- 7 Bragi is a poet-god (see *Grm.* 44). His wife, the goddess Iðunn, is best known for owning the apples that kept the gods young. She was abducted by the giant Þjazi, but reclaimed with Loki’s help (*SnEskáld*, I, 22, pp. 30–33; cf. *Ls.* 50).
- 8 The wolf Fenrir.
- 9 These details about Týr, presumably derived from *Ls.* 38–39, seem superfluous. The myth of how Týr lost a hand to the bound Fenrir is told in *SnEGylf* (25, p. 25; 34, pp. 27–29). It might explain two Viking Age carvings from northern England: a hogback stone from Sockburn on Tees, which shows a man with his right hand in the mouth of a chained, wolf-like beast; and the south face of the Gosforth Cross, which depicts a wolf-like creature escaping its bonds, above a rider with a short arm.
- 10 Njorðr, a sea-god, is one of the Vanir and the father of Freyr and Freyja; see *Vm.* 38. His wife, Skaði, is a giantess, about whom see *SnEGylf* (23, pp. 23–24), *SnEskáld* (I, G56, p. 2) and chapter 8 of *Ynglinga saga*.
- 11 For the obscure god Byggvir (here and in st. 45 spelt *Beyggvir* in R) and his wife Beyla, see *Ls.* 43–46, 55–56. The prose omits to mention the goddess Gefjun (*Ls.* 19–21) and the god Heimdallr (*Ls.* 47–48).
- 12 The location is Ægir’s hall.
- 13 The name *Fimafengr* ‘Quick Seizer’, is unknown outside *Ls.* and the corresponding passage in *SnEskáld* (I, 33, p. 41). The name *Eldir* suggests responsibility for tending fires (*eldar*), though in *Ls.* he may perform the traditional function of door-guardian. His name occurs in the same passage of *SnEskáld* and in a term for ‘giant’ (*SnEskáld*, I, 57, p. 87).
- 14 As in the related passage in *SnEskáld* (I, 33, p. 40), which uses the same word, *lýsigull* ‘shining gold’.
- 15 Again, as in *SnEskáld* (I, 33, p. 41). Note, however, that Loki is served by Víðarr and Sif later in *Ls.*

- 16 The holiness of Ægir's hall helps to explain subsequent events. Not only will Loki's lurid accusations defile a sacred place, but he will utter them without fear of physical punishment, at least until Þórr arrives. Cf. *SnEGylf* (34, p. 29; 49, p. 46) and *SnESkáld* (I, 1, p. 6).
- 17 In *SnESkáld* (I, 33, p. 41), the slaying of Fimafengr is not said to precede the flyting between Loki and the gods.
- 18 Literally, 'Say it'.
- 19 The 'sons of the victory-gods' are the gods themselves.
- 20 Or 'their battle-readiness/keenness'.
- 21 The gods' hostility to Loki arguably results not just from his slaying of Fimafengr, but also from his instigation of the death of Baldr at the hands of Höðr, both of whom are conspicuously absent from the feast. As it stands, the final line of this stanza does not alliterate according to conventional rules, since *er* 'is' ought not to bear alliterative stress here. Three possible explanations: exceptional alliteration of *v-* (in *vinr*) with a vowel; alliteration of *v-* with an earlier form of *orð* (< Germanic **wurða*); some untraceable corruption.
- 22 Whether the unique form *joll* 'discord, enmity, insult(?)' should stand is uncertain. It might be a mistake for *oll*, which, although not otherwise attested in Old Norse, appears several times in Old English in the sense 'scorn, insult, mockery'. Either way, a pun on serving *ol* 'ale' seems likely; cf. *glímálum* in *Ls.* 1. Another possibility is that the text should read *í òlluk áfu færi ek Ása sonum* 'at the ale-ending I'll bring disgrace to the Æsir's sons'.
- 23 The image is of Loki mixing a poisonous herbal extract into the gods' mead, instead of a sweetener or other flavouring. Cf. *Sd.* 8.
- 24 An alias of Loki, probably related to *lopt* 'air', 'sky'. As a thirsty hall-visitor who uses an alias, the argumentative Loki appears comparable to Óðinn as *Gagnráðr* 'Contrary Counsellor' in *Vm.* 8. At root, the name *Loki* itself probably means 'Blamer', 'Mocker', a nature exemplified in *Ls.*
- 25 *þrungrinn*, literally 'thronged', 'pressed', implies that the gods are bursting with barely controlled rage and, perhaps, drink.
- 26 As a god of poetry (*bragr*), it may have been Bragi's duty to announce, greet or test newcomers.
- 27 If *gamban-* means 'tribute' (cf. OE *gambe*, -*an* 'tribute'; also ON *gambanteinn* 'tribute(?)-twig' and *gambanreiði* 'tribute(?)-wrath' in *FSk.* 32–33), a *gambansumbl* could be a 'feast given in tribute' or a 'feast worthy of tribute'—either way, a magnificent banquet.
- 28 The blood-brotherhood of Óðinn and Loki is mentioned only in *Ls.* However, *Helblindi*, an alias of Óðinn in the R text of *Grm.* 46 (A has *Herblindr*) and *SnEGylf* (20, p. 21), is the name of one of Loki's brothers according to *SnEGylf* (33, p. 26) and *SnESkáld* (I, 16, p. 19; see also I, p. 168, note to p. 20/2).
- 29 The same term, *úlf's faðir* 'wolf's father', describes Loki in *Haustr.* 8. Loki is the father of Fenrir, the monstrous wolf that Víðarr slays at Ragnarok in *Vsp.* 53 (cf. *Ls.* 58). As it stands, the first line of this stanza does not alliterate according to the usual rules. Three possible explanations: exceptional alliteration of *v-* with a vowel; alliteration of *v-* with an earlier form of *úlfr* (Germanic **wulfaz*); some untraceable corruption.
- 30 Literally '(rune-)staves'.

- 31 Many early societies founded on concepts of personal honour and shame take the prospect of public calumny very seriously.
- 32 Loki.
- 33 Goddesses.
- 34 Sg. of *Æsir*.
- 35 Loki has ignored Bragi's insult of *Ls.* 8 until now, when he gets a seat on the bench. Bragi, however, still has a more prestigious sitting position ('further in').
- 36 An arm-ring, presumably to make up for his initial rebuff to Loki. Horses, swords and arm-rings were among the most prized possessions of warriors.
- 37 The precise sense of *gfundr*, here translated 'ill-will', is uncertain; possible alternatives include 'envy', 'resentment' and '(a) malicious deed'.
- 38 Horses and arm-rings were taken by warriors from vanquished foes and given by victorious warlords to their best soldiers as rewards. Loki's accusation that Bragi is a coward finds no support in other Norse texts, but few tell us anything about him. In this stanza, as in *Ls.* 54, 62 and 65, Loki uses the extended form of *ljóðaháttir* known as *galdralag*. It gives these stanzas extra weight, perhaps even magical force. Óðinn, god of poetry and magic, also uses *galdralag* in *Ls.* 23.
- 39 Ægir's hall is a place of sanctuary, where physical violence is forbidden, as indicated in the opening prose.
- 40 *Ægis høll um kominn* lacks standard alliteration, as alliterative stress does not normally fall on *um*.
- 41 This line requires emendation in **R**. Even then, the wording appears elliptical, in that the literal sense, 'it's little for you for lying', must be expanded to 'it's little for you (to pay) for lying' or 'it's little (punishment) for you for lying'. A different solution corrects **R**'s *litt* to *lít*, the first-person sg. present indicative of *lita* 'to look upon': *lít ek þér þat fyr lygi* 'I look upon it (as retaliation) for your lie'.
- 42 For the Old Norse line to alliterate, it requires an East Norse or preliterary West Norse form of *reiðr*, namely **vreiðr*; it seems likely that *vega vreiðr* is an old poetic formula; cf. *Ls.* 18. 27; *Fm.* 7, 17, 30; *Sd.* 27.
- 43 Although the exact meaning of the last, proverbial-sounding line is uncertain, it is clear that Loki calls Bragi's bluff. Alternative translations include 'a brave man has no regard for his safety', 'a brave man doesn't think ahead' and 'a brave man thinks nothing stands in his way'.
- 44 I.e., words.
- 45 The meaning of the first half of this stanza is unclear, as is the identity of the *óskmegir* 'wish-sons', 'adopted sons'. But, in addition to Loki (whose father was the giant Fárbauti), they may include Bragi (possibly an apotheosis of the ninth-century poet Bragi Boddason the Old) and the human *einherjar*, who are known by the similar term *óskasynir* in *SnEGylf* (20, p. 21). If the term *óskmegir* is not truly gender-specific—cf. references to 'sons of the victory gods' and 'sons of the *Æsir*' in *Ls.* 1, 64—it's field of reference may also extend to the giantess Skaði and the valkyries (Brynhildr is an *óskmær* 'wish-maiden' in *Od.* 16).
- 46 If Loki is accusing Iðunn—like Frigg in *Ls.* 26—of being lustful or even a nymphomaniac, his accusation is not supported by other texts. He may simply be claiming that, merely by marrying a posturing coward like Bragi, Iðunn has shown herself to be the woman most desperate for a man—any man.

- 47 *Hrfn.* 6 confirms that Iðunn had siblings, but her brother's identity is uncertain. The identity of Iðunn's 'brother's killer' (*bróðurbani*; cf. *FSk.* 16)—or perhaps, if the word may be interpreted more broadly, 'mortal enemy'—is also uncertain. He might be Bragi or Loki himself. If the latter, Loki may be claiming to have cuckolded Bragi.
- 48 For the last line to have standard alliteration, it requires an East Norse or preliterary West Norse form of *reiðir*, namely **vreiðir*.
- 49 The goddess *Gefjun* 'Giving One' was overlooked in the prose prologue.
- 50 Here the term *Æsir* includes Loki, perhaps as a placatory strategy on Gefjun's part; cf. *Ls.* 25 and contrast Iðunn's words in *Ls.* 16.
- 51 The often grotesque antics of Loki, the Norse trickster-god, are recorded in texts such as *Brk.*, *SnEGylf* and *SnEskáld*.
- 52 Perhaps specifically the 'living (gods)'.
- 53 The gods have a love-hate relationship with Loki, who, whilst often causing harm, also finds ingenious ways to get them out of trouble—as, for example, in *Brk.*
- 54 Or 'who led your senses astray'.
- 55 The 'white boy' may well be Heimdallr, who is identified as white in *Brk.* 15 and *SnEGylf* (27, p. 25), and who took possession of a precious object associated with a goddess (see below). If *Heimdallr* means 'Home/World Tree', he is probably identifiable with the world-ash, in which case his blondness may reflect this tree being 'sprinkled with white clay' (*Vsp.* 19 and perhaps *Ls.* 48); it may also reflect his associations with sheep (*SnEGylf* 27, pp. 25–26; *SnEskáld*, I, 75, p. 131). To judge from *Vkv.* 2, whiteness was thought attractive in a man, but here Loki's allusion to the boy's colour probably implies cowardice or effeminacy. Loki's designation of him as a *sveinn* 'boy' also appears pejorative (cf. *Hrbl.* 1–2). Alternatively, the 'white boy' might be Bragi, the cowardly god associated with jewellery by the term 'Bench-Ornament' in *Ls.* 15.
- 56 This accusation may have been especially stinging for Gefjun, as *SnEGylf* (35, p. 29) calls her a *mær* 'maiden' whom all those who died as maidens served, and some Christian translators equated her with the chaste classical goddesses Athena/Minerva, Artemis/Diana and Vesta. Furthermore, it is Gefjun who is addressed by a woman *reluctantly* grasping a horse's phallus in the Old Norse *Vølsa þátr* 'Tale of Vølsi'. On the other hand, there is evidence to associate Gefjun with the sphere of love and fertility. She has four giant sons and receives plough-land from Óðinn as a reward for *skemtun* 'entertainment' (probably sexual) in *SnEGylf* (1, p. 7). She marries Skjoldr, progenitor of Danish aristocracy, in *Ynglinga saga*. In addition, her name, which means 'Giving One', and her links with Freyja (see below) may suggest fecundity. She is equated with Venus in *Stjórn*, a collection of Norse texts based on the Old Testament. The story mentioned in the present stanza cannot be identified with certainty; possibly it is Loki's invention. It might, however, refer to a possible myth about Heimdallr's recovery of a jewel, girdle or neck-ring—the *Brísingamen* 'torc of the Brísingar'—from the sea, after he and Loki had fought over it in the form of seals; cf. *Húsdr.* 2, *SnEskáld* (I, 16, p. 20) and *Beowulf* ll. 1197–1201. Elsewhere, in *Brk.* and the fourteenth-century *Sqrla þátr* 'Tale of Sqrlí', the precious object is in Freyja's possession, not Gefjun's. It is, however, possible that these two goddesses were once identified, since one of Freyia's names, *Gefn* 'Giver', is etymologically related to *Gefjun*.
- 57 Cf. *HH. II* 34; *Od.* 15 [11].
- 58 Or 'when you direct your wrath against Gefjun' (literally 'when you seize Gefjun to yourself in wrath').

- 59 Cf. *Hrfn.* 11–15, in which Gefjun weeps when asked about the end of the world. It is unclear why Óðinn should declare it mad of Loki to provoke a goddess who knows the fate of the world. Cf. *Ls.* 29.
- 60 Óðinn was inclined to give lesser men victory so that the better ones, having fallen in battle, could become members of the *einherjar* ‘unique warriors’ who would fight beside him at Ragnarok.
- 61 Or ‘as a milker of a cow [milking being considered lowly women’s work; cf. *Ls.* 56] and a woman’. Either way, this myth of subterranean transformation is otherwise unknown, unless it connects with Loki’s manifestation as the giantess sitting *í helli nökvvorum* ‘in a certain cave’ in *SnEGylf* (49, p. 48). Loki is, however, famous for cross-gender metamorphosis. Comparing a man to a female animal is a serious offense in early Norse legal texts.
- 62 The early Norwegian *Gulaþingslög* ‘Gulaþing’s Law’ specifically outlaws any man who accuses another man of having *barn boreit* ‘given birth to babies’. Such accusations were punishable by death under early Icelandic law.
- 63 The adjective *argr* ‘perverse’, here used substantively, implies the highly stigmatized violation of sexual and gender norms, and especially a man’s ‘unmanliness’—that is, his failure to enact the culturally expected masculinity.
- 64 Loki may mean that Óðinn collapsed upon entering a shamanistic trance involving *seiðr*, or when emerging from one. *Seiðr* was a kind of sorcery involving spirits (see *Vsp.* 22) that was deemed unacceptable for men, but which Óðinn is known to have practised: *seið Yggr* ‘Yggr [an Óðinn-alias] practised *seiðr*’, according to st. 3 of the tenth-century *Sigurðardrápa* ‘Sigurðr’s Poem’ by the Icelander Kormákr Qgmundarson (*SPSMA III*, 277–79). Cf. the sinking of the seeress in *Vsp.* 63; Óðinn’s ritualistic falling from a tree in *Háv.* 139; and the ritualistic-sounding description of a man who *sigeð sworcenferð* ‘sinks dark in mind’ from a high tree in the Old English poem *The Fates of Mortals* (l. 25). Alternatively, translate ‘you lowered (yourself)’. Alternatively again, emend *síga* to *síða* and translate ‘they said you practised *seiðr* (i.e., a form of feminine sorcery)’.
- 65 The Danish island of Samsø in the Kattegat. Cf. *HH.* I 37.
- 66 Conceivably to summon spirits, but the translation ‘struck a drum’ is uncertain; cf. *Vsp.* 22.
- 67 Or ‘over’, if we are to think of Óðinn flying like a witch (cf. *Háv.* 155).
- 68 Sorcerers often appear in Icelandic stories. In them, men who, like Óðinn, practised *seiðr* were generally despised, perhaps because of the perceived sexual perversions demanded by their art.
- 69 Cf. the similar use of *seggr* ‘man’ to denote a god in *FSk.* 4–5.
- 70 Judging from the rest of the stanza, Frigg means ‘past events that were fated to happen to you’.
- 71 Loki is again counted among the Æsir.
- 72 This line might be translated more idiomatically as ‘Let bygones be bygones!'
- 73 ON *mær* can denote ‘maiden’, ‘daughter’, ‘lover’ or ‘wife’, but *SnESkáld* (I, 19, p. 30) calls Frigg *dóttur Fjörgyns* ‘daughter of Fjörgynn’ and *SnEGylf* (9, p. 13) *Fjörgvinsdóttir* ‘Fjörgvinn’s daughter’. The identity of *Fjörgynn* ‘Earth/Mountain’ is uncertain, but the name is apparently a masc. equivalent of *Fjörgyn*, the giantess also known as *Jörð* ‘Earth’ who gave birth to Pórr after a sexual union with Óðinn.
- 74 Óðinn. The name might identify him as a god of the weather (*veðr*).

- 75 Óðinn's brothers. Their names mean roughly 'Holy One' and 'Will/Desire'. Chapter 3 of *Ynglinga saga* states that they shared Frigg between them when they thought Óðinn would not return from his wanderings.
- 76 The son of Frigg and Óðinn. *SnEGylf* (49, p. 45) calls him *Baldr inn góða* 'Baldr the good'.
- 77 Literally, 'come out'.
- 78 Or 'and you'd then be fought furiously'. Frigg's intervention plays into the hands of Loki, who, according to *SnEGylf* (49, pp. 45–46), contrived the death of Baldr at the hand of the victim's brother, Hœðr, with a branch of mistletoe and later thwarted his resurrection from Hel. Perhaps Frigg does not know of Loki's involvement. Or perhaps she does, but is too distraught to think clearly. She might even be in a state of denial about the killing, since, according to *SnEGylf*, it was she who exempted the mistletoe from swearing not to harm Baldr, and she again who unwittingly revealed this knowledge to Loki. A martial side to Baldr's character is evident from the account of his battles in the third book of *GD*. Elsewhere, it is not pronounced. For the final line of this stanza to alliterate, it probably requires an East Norse or preliterary West Norse form of *reiðum*, namely **vreiðum*.
- 79 Or 'I shall bring it about'. The line might refer to Loki's (presumed) disguise as the giantess *Pqkk* 'Thanks', who alone refuses to cry for the dead Baldr and so thwarts Frigg's attempt to rescue him from Hel (*SnEGylf* 49, pp. 47–48).
- 80 Or 'hideous misdeeds'.
- 81 What prompts Freyja to intervene at this point is unclear, as is the thrust of her statement. Perhaps she is trying to bring Loki down a notch by stressing that his contemptuous words, though hurtful to Frigg, cannot tell her anything she does not know already—and that, for all his cleverness and self-confidence, he, like everyone else ('all fates'), is subject to destiny. Cf. a stanza attributed to Loki in *SnEGylf* (20, p. 21); *SnEUpp* (17, pp. 35–36). Snorri may have conflated parts of Ls. 29 with parts of Ls. 21 and 47. Alternatively, he may be quoting from a different version of the poem, since lost.
- 82 Freyja had a reputation for promiscuity: cf. e.g. Ls. 32, *Prk.* 13, *Hdl.* 6, 46–47.
- 83 According to chapter 4 of *Ynglinga saga*, Freyja *var blótgyða*. *Hon kendi fyrst með Ásum seið, sem Vønum var tít* 'was a sacrifice-priestess. She was the first to teach sorcery, which was customary for the Vanir, among the Æsir'.
- 84 This line is corrupt in R, but two traditional emendations make sense of it. Firstly, the verb is pl., so R's nom. sg. *sitztu* (= *sízt* 'since' + *pú* 'you') is presumably a scribal error for the acc. sg. form, which serves as this line's direct object. Secondly, R's verb *sipo* 'they bewitched, enchanted, 'practised sorcery (on)' is hard to understand in context: the possibility that the passage means 'since the kind gods enchanted you to your brother' seems remote, as it is Freyja, not the gods, whom Loki accuses of witchcraft in this stanza. It is likely, therefore, that *sipo* is a scribal error for *stóþu*, the idiom *standa einhvern* 'to surprise someone' being well-attested. The brother in question is doubtless Freyr. The siblings' names suggest a pairing, as they mean 'Lord' and 'Lady'.
- 85 This line may implicitly accuse Freyja of having had anal sex.
- 86 Njørðr intervenes to defend his daughter. The Vanir were originally incestuous, according to chapter 4 of *Ynglinga saga*.
- 87 Accusations of men giving birth are found elsewhere in Old Norse texts, which suggests they were conventional, though outrageous.

- 88 Chapter 4 of *Ynglinga saga* reports that Njörðr and his son, Freyr, were sent as hostages to the Æsir at the end of that tribe's war with the Vanir. *SnEGylf* (23–24, pp. 23–24) also records that Njörðr was sent as a hostage to the Æsir, but says, in agreement with *Ls.* 35, that Freyr was born later. It is curious that Loki says that Njörðr was sent 'east from here', since that direction is usually associated with the land of hostile giants; it appears, then, that Ægir's hall is far (*Ls.* 35 *langr*) to the west of the Æsir's realm.
- 89 Probably a reference to the communal piss-trough that was often a feature of Norse households.
- 90 The relationship between the two halves of this stanza is unclear. The allusion in the second half is probably to giantesses ('Hymir's daughters'), from whom rivers of urine flow into an estuary ('piss-trough') imagined as the 'mouth' of the sea-god, Njörðr. Cf. a story from *SnESkáld* (I, 18, p. 25) in which a giantess makes a river swell by standing astride it and almost drowns Pórr; also that tale's source in Eilífr Guðrúnarson's tenth-century skaldic poem *Pórsdrápa* (*SnESkáld*, I, 18, pp. 25–28), in which the torrent is caused by the urine of two giantesses.
- 91 Freyr.
- 92 Chapter 4 of *Ynglinga saga* records that Freyr was the child of Njörðr and Njörðr's sister, though this information might simply derive from *Ls.* The name of Njörðr's sister is unknown.
- 93 The last line of this stanza does not alliterate according to conventional rules. Three possible explanations: exceptional alliteration of *v-* with a vowel; alliteration of *v-* with the form **vánu* or **vónu* (for *ónu*); some untraceable corruption.
- 94 Freyr rode a horse or a boar. His horse is mentioned in *FSk.* 8–9. According to *Húsdr.* 7, Freyr rode a golden-bristled boar. *SnEGylf* (49, p. 47) says Freyr rode in a chariot pulled by a gold-bristled boar called *Gullinbursti* 'Golden Bristle' or *Slíðrugtanni* 'Dangerously Sharp-Toothed'. *SnESkáld* (I, 35, p. 42) records that Freyr's boar could cross sky and sea faster than any horse, and that its bristles lit up the darkest night.
- 95 Literally *bera tilt með tveim* means 'to carry well with two', so this line probably contains a cruel pun at the expense of Týr's one-handedness. *SnEGylf* (25, p. 25) says that Týr is not known as a peace-maker. The idea of imbalance relates to his one-handedness. However, the story of the loss of his right (more benign?) hand to Fenrir shows that Týr kept his side of the bargain with the wolf. Also, a faint memory of his trustworthiness might survive in st. 17 of the *Old English Rune Poem*, which says that *Tir biþ tacna sum; healdeð trywa wel / wiþ æbelingas* 'Tir is one of the guiding signs; it keeps faith well with princes'.
- 96 *Hróðrvitnir* 'Glory's Wolf' is Fenrir; cf. *Hróðvitnir* in *Grm.* 39. Loki lacks his son, the wolf Fenrir, whom the gods have bound.
- 97 The third line of this stanza lacks alliteration in R. Possible fixes include replacing *bondum* 'bonds' with *øngum* 'constraints' or *jørnum* 'irons', or substituting *betr* 'better' for *vel* 'well'.
- 98 Or 'for the twilight of the powers'—that is (either way), for Ragnarök. *Ragna rök(k)r* (or *ragnarök(k)r*, as in *SnEGylf* and *SnESkáld*) might well derive by folk etymology from *ragna rök* 'doom/fate of the powers', the words used in *Vsp.* and other Eddic poems.
- 99 Týr's wife is otherwise unknown, as is the child (assuming there was one).
- 100 Ostensibly an ell (*qln*) of cloth, but there is probably also a punning allusion to Týr's one-handedness, since *qln* also means 'fore-arm' (cf. English 'elbow' from OE *el(n)boga*) and *qlnliðr* meant 'wrist'.

- 101 Fenrir, who was bound by the gods (*SnEGylf* 34, pp. 27–29).
- 102 The precise location appears deliberately vague (but note the Danish city of *Århus*, earlier *Áróss* ‘River Mouth’, on the *Århus* River). *SnEGylf* (34, pp. 28–29) places the bound Fenrir on an island called *Lyngvi* in a lake called *Amsvartnir*; a river of slaver called *Ván* ‘Expectation/Hope’ runs from his mouth.
- 103 Or ‘You said you bought Gymir’s daughter with gold, ...’. In *FSk.* Skírnir undertakes a quest to win Gerðr, radiant daughter of the giant Gymir, on behalf of his master, Freyr, having received from him his giant-slaying (and probably golden-hilted) sword. Skírnir offers her golden apples and a ring, which she refuses, initially at least (it might be that she received them later, after giving in to Skírnir’s threats). See also *Vsp.* 51 and *SnEGylf* (51, p. 50).
- 104 Or ‘through’.
- 105 Muspell’s sons are giants or other evil beings who advance against the gods at Ragnarok; see *Vsp.* 49. *Myrkviðr* ‘Murk Wood’, the archetypal ‘Black Forest’, was originally a name for the vast mountainous forest of central Europe, but came to signify a wooded mythological barrier between worlds.
- 106 Cf. *SnEGylf* (51, p. 50).
- 107 Byggvir (also *Beyggvir*) is an obscure figure, unknown elsewhere in Norse records. Judging from the vocabulary of milling in *Ls.* 43–44, his name may well derive from ON *bygg* ‘barley’. He is probably a barley-spirit. Cf. Sir John Barleycorn in English folklore and OE *Béow* ‘Barley’ in *Beowulf* l. 18 (an emendation), who may have been originally a grain-god. Byggvir is probably also related to the Estonian deity *Pek(k)o*, whose name can be derived from ON **beggw-*, an antecedent of *bygg*. Note also the likely ‘grain-giants’ Bergelmir and Aurgelmir of *Vm.* 29–35.
- 108 Byggvir, as Freyr’s servant, uses a grand, perhaps archaic, title for his lord. The meaning and etymology of *Ingunar* are uncertain. It might be the gen. sg. of **Ingun(n)*, a woman’s name, and may incorporate a descendant of a Germanic god-name, *Inguz*. Cf. *Yngvi-Freyr*, Freyr’s better known title; *Ingwina* ‘(of) Ing-friends’ in *Beowulf* l. 1044 and, in association with *frea* (the Old English cognate of ON *Freyr*), *fréa(n)* *Ingwina* ‘lord of Ing-friends’ in *Beowulf* l. 1319.
- 109 I.e., residence. Freyr’s hall may have stood in *Álfheimr* ‘Elf World’; see *Grm.* 5. Byggvir’s origins are presumably humble.
- 110 Bone-marrow.
- 111 I.e., ‘slanderer’ (Loki). This line has double alliteration in its second half.
- 112 The last line is loosely translated.
- 113 Loki refers to Byggvir in the neut., perhaps because *bygg* ‘barley’ is neut.
- 114 Cf. a wagtail.
- 115 The literal sense is ‘and (that being) snap-wise snaps’.
- 116 The comparison in the second half of this stanza seems to be to a small bird.
- 117 Spelt *Beyggvir* here in **R**, as in the prose prologue.
- 118 *Bráðr* ‘nimble’ has connotations of rashness and drunken anger; it is related to *brugga* ‘to brew’.
- 119 The Æsir. *Hroptr* is an alias of Óðinn.

- 120 Byggvir may be proud of the gods' communal drinking because barley was a basic ingredient of ale.
- 121 As a likely barley-god, Byggvir may be responsible for bread as well as drink.
- 122 ON *flet*, here translated 'floor', more specifically denotes the raised platform that ran along the wall of a Norse hall, where there were benches and tables and where people slept.
- 123 Loki might again imagine Byggvir as a hungry little bird, a creature sometimes seen in the straw during times of peace, but invariably absent at the first sign of trouble. He might also be implying that Byggvir fails to defend straw, the natural home of a grain-god. In addition, he is probably implying that the ale in which Byggvir takes such pride as a source of conviviality also often causes men to fight.
- 124 Or 'stiff back', if R's spelling of the adjective (*aурго*) represents *orgu* 'erect, stiff', the syncopated dat. sg. neut. of *grðugr*. Either way, if, as elsewhere, Loki is travestyng something sacred, the explanation is that *Heimdallr* 'Home/World Tree' is a manifestation of the towering world-ash, which is drenched in white mud (*aurr*) and associated with a muddy (*aurugr*) waterfall in *Vsp.* 19 and 27. Loki perhaps also alludes to bird-droppings. Alternatively, Loki may be denigrating Heimdallr's eternal wakefulness by attributing it not to the resilient strength of a tree or unwavering devotion to duty, but simply to the discomfort of a stiff back. A pun on the two words is possible, perhaps also with a nod to *orgu* 'sexually perverse' (from *argr*); cf. the possible relationship between Heimdallr's alias *Rigr* and ON *rigr* 'stiffness' in *Rþ. Ls.*'s possible portrayal of Heimdallr as rigidly erect is not supported by *SnEGylf*, which has him sitting down on watch, before standing up at Ragnarok (*SnEGylf* 27, p. 25; 51, p. 50). The white mud might also reflect the foamy seashore where Heimdallr was born (cf. *Hdl.* 38).
- 125 Heimdallr's unenviable duty is to watch and listen unceasingly, using his extraordinary sight and hearing, for the advance of giants at Ragnarok. When he detects their coming, he will blow his horn; see *Vsp.* 45 and *SnEGylf* (27, p. 25; 51, p. 50). In the last line of this stanza, Loki perhaps imputes that Heimdallr's life is demeaning because it restricts him to one place. Guardsmen are often of low status in Norse texts.
- 126 Literally, 'you won't play with a loose tail like this for long'.
- 127 Perhaps more specifically a sharp cliff-edge, as *hjorr* (cf. ON *hqogr* 'stone altar' or 'cairn', and Swedish dialect *har* 'stony ground') elsewhere means 'sword'. On Loki's torture, see also *Vsp.* 34, *SnEGylf* (50, p. 49) and a carving on the west face of the Gosforth Cross in Cumbria, England.
- 128 See the prose epilogue.
- 129 Literally, 'life-laying', i.e., death, killing.
- 130 *SnESkáld* (I, G56, pp. 1–2) tells of Loki's part in the killing of the giant Þjazi, Skaði's father, who with Loki's help had made off with the goddess Iðunn and the apples that kept the gods young. St. 6 of Kormákr Qgmundarson's *Sigurðardrápa* records that 'the gods tricked (*véltu*) Þjazi', which suggests that Loki, the trickster-god, may have been involved (SPSMA III, 283–84). In *Hrl.* 19, though, Þórr appears to claim sole credit for the killing. A very different account of Þjazi's death survives in one redaction of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*.
- 131 Loki. His mother, Laufey, appears briefly as an old woman, the wife of an old man called Fárbauti (a giant according to *SnEGylf*), in a description of Loki's origins in chapter 2 of *Syrla þátr 'Sorli's Tale'*. A versified list of names includes *Laufey* among a list of goddess-names for women (SPSMA III, 960–61).

- 132 No other text records this event.
- 133 Þórr's wife. Her name is supplied editorially.
- 134 Either a cup made of frosted glass or a cup covered with frost.
- 135 Cf. *FSk.* 37.
- 136 Sif refers to herself.
- 137 Unless there is an inconsistency, it seems that Loki rejects Sif's *hrímklákr* 'frost-cup/goblet' in favour of a drinking-horn.
- 138 The alliteration falls unusually on *ef* 'if', giving it emphasis.
- 139 *Hlórriði* is a name for Þórr. That Loki claims to have cuckolded him is clear, but the grammatical construction and, hence, the translation of this passage, is not. Cf. *Hrbl.* 48.
- 140 No other text confirms that Loki slept with Sif. However, the revelation of *SnEskáld* (I, 35, p. 41) that Loki cut off all her hair 'for love of mischief' (*til lævísi*) necessitates physical proximity, because the cutting could presumably have been done only while Sif was off-guard, perhaps while asleep in bed with her hair loose; in medieval Iceland, married women usually wore their hair tied beneath headdresses when in public.
- 141 The prose prologue places Þórr in the east, not at home; cf. *Hrbl.* 3. Þórr travels in a goat-drawn chariot, beneath which rocks break and sparks fly; cf. *Prk.* 21.
- 142 This statement can be understood as an insult, given Loki's opinion of Byggvir. Beyla (cf. ON *baula* 'cow') is unknown outside *Ls.*
- 143 Loki uses identical words of Freyja in *Ls.* 32. Here, though, he may exploit their literal sense, 'much mixed with harm', to hint that Beyla blends dirt, or worse, into the drink or food she provides: cf. *Ls.* 3, *Sg.* 8 and *Háv.* 137.
- 144 *Deigja* denotes a kind of maid-servant, probably either a dairymaid or one responsible for making bread with dough.
- 145 Literally '... are all dirtied'.
- 146 *Vættr* 'wight', 'creature' is a fem. noun.
- 147 A kenning for 'head'.
- 148 The son of *Jörð* 'Earth' is Þórr. Alternative emendations of the first half of this line insert *sonr* 'son' or *arfi* 'heir' in place of *burr*.
- 149 Or 'shall'.
- 150 Fenrir. According to *Vsp.* 54 and *SnEGylf* (51, p. 50), Þórr will fight Miðgarðsomr at Ragnarok, not the Wolf. Possibly *Ls.* alludes to a variant tradition (cf. *Hym.* 11 and the unemended *Vsp.* 54). Alternatively, Loki may simply be asserting that Þórr will be too scared to fight the wolf; cf. his accusation of cowardice in *Ls.* 60. Note the word-play: *Þórr* will not *þorir* 'dare'.
- 151 The wolf Fenrir.
- 152 'Victory/Battle Father', an alias of Óðinn here obviously spoken mockingly (cf. *Vsp.* 53). On Óðinn's death at Ragnarok, see *Vsp.* 52-3, *Vm.* 53 and *SnEGylf* (51, p. 50).
- 153 I.e., into Jötunheimar, the realm of giants.
- 154 *Einheri* is the sg. of *einherjar*, otherwise the 'unique/only warriors' who, having fallen in battle, enter Valhöll and await Ragnarok, when they will help Óðinn in his doomed fight against the wolf. The term might be a survival of an Indo-European conception of the ultimate warrior, but Loki doubtless uses it mockingly. He at once scorns the 'lone (*einn*)

- warrior' (cf. *Hym.* 22 *einbani* 'lone slayer') who cowers, and puns on the sense 'solitary hare' (*einn* 'one' + *heri* 'hare'), the hare being an animal likely to flee at the first sign of trouble.
- 155 Or 'and you didn't think yourself to be Þórr then!' Loki can comment because he, unlike the guests at Ægir's feast, was there. The story is told in *SnEGylf* (45, pp. 37–38); see also *Hrbl.* 26, which contains the same words.
- 156 'Hrungnir's slayer' is Mjöllnir, Hrungnir being a famous giant whom Þórr slew; see *Hrbl.* 14–15.
- 157 Of food.
- 158 An allusion to an episode in the journey of Þórr, his servants and Loki to Útgardá-Loki, alluded to in *Ls.* 60 and *Hrbl.* 26. According to *SnEGylf* (45, p. 38), the giant Skrymír gave Þórr a knapsack containing their pooled provisions, but Þórr could not undo the straps, which are later revealed to be made of (magical?) iron (*SnEGylf* 47, pp. 42–3).
- 159 The underworld of the dead, or the female who ruled it.
- 160 In *SnEGylf* (49, p. 47) the word used is *Helgrindr* 'Hel-gates'.
- 161 *Logi* 'flame' may prefigure the fire of Ragnarok, the heat from which similarly *leikr* 'plays/sports' against the sky in *Vsp.* 55. It may also pun on Loki's name; the same association of names is found in the tale of Loki's doomed attempt to consume meat faster than Logi, a personified flame, in *SnEGylf* (46, p. 40; 47, p. 43).
- 162 I.e., flicker.
- 163 This prose epilogue is related to the account in *SnEGylf* (50, pp. 48–49) of Loki's capture and punishment after the gods' failure to redeem Baldr from Hel.
- 164 Probably 'Waterfall of the Sparkling Fjord'.
- 165 The method of capture can possibly be inferred from the related account of Ægir's feast and Loki's quarrel with the gods in *SnESkáld* (I, 33, pp. 40–41), which ends *Þá urðu Æsir þess varir at Rán átti net þat er hon veiddi í menn alla þá er á sæ kómu* 'Then the gods became aware that Rán had a net in which she caught all those people who took to sea.' Presumably, in this account, Loki was caught by the net of Ægir's wife, the sea-goddess Rán 'Plunder(?)', and not, as in *SnEGylf* (50, p. 49), by the hand of Þórr.
- 166 In the Old Norse text, the possessive pronoun *síns* 'his' has perhaps dropped out before *sonar* 'son'. Nari is also known from a kenning in the skaldic poem *Høfuðlausn* 'Head-Ransom' (in *Egils saga*) by the tenth-century Icelander Egill Skallagrímsson: Hel, goddess of the underworld, is *nipt Nara* 'sister of Nari'.
- 167 St. 7 of *Ynglingatal* 'The Tally of the Ynglingar' by Þjóðólfr of Hvin identifies Narfi as a sibling of the goddess Hel and the wolf (Fenrir).
- 168 A wolf-like creature is shown below a likely depiction of Loki's torture on the c. 800 Ardre VIII stone from Gotland.
- 169 Loki's torture is shown on the west face of the tenth-century Gosforth Cross from Cumbria and probably on the Ardre VIII stone; see also *Vsp.* 34. The Gosforth Cross shows, in addition to a prostrate Loki, the snake, and Sigyn kneeling with the hand-basin. *Vsp.* 34, like *Ls.*'s epilogue, has her sitting, but *SnEGylf* has her standing.
- 170 This explanation might indicate an origin in Iceland, a country of frequent seismic activity.

Prymskviða

Prymskviða (*Prk.*) ‘The Lay of Prymr’ survives in R (fol. 17r–18r). Its date of composition is uncertain, with opinions ranging from the ninth century to the mid-thirteenth. The frequent use of the meaningless metrical filler *um* might indicate an early date of composition (it appears before verbs that in Primitive Norse would have had a meaningful prefix), but this feature might instead be a deliberate archaism. Similar doubt surrounds the significance of several half-lines of *fornyrðislag* that appear too short unless earlier word-forms with one more syllable are substituted.

The story of the theft and recovery of Þórr’s hammer (originally thunderous or fulgural) is not mentioned in any other Eddic poem. Nor is it referenced in Snorri’s *Prose Edda* or in the compositions of heathen skaldic poets recorded elsewhere. Perhaps *Prk.* reached Iceland comparatively late, having been composed elsewhere. John McKinnell has argued for an origin in the Anglo-Norse Danelaw and suggests that this ‘English’ poem was revised in twelfth- or thirteenth-century Iceland under the influence of ballad style.¹ Other accounts of the story survive in the Icelandic *rímur* ‘rhyming poem’ cycle called *Prymlur*, which was possibly composed between the mid-fourteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries, and in Scandinavian ballads written down in the late nineteenth century; these stand in uncertain relation to the Eddic poem.² Related myths are part of Baltic tradition. Additionally, stories of the theft or loss of a sky-god’s weapon or potency survive in the mythological traditions of other European cultures, which suggests that the general theme has ancient roots. Instances may include the Old English poem *Beowulf*, in which the sword that beheads Grendel’s mother, and which the hero takes from the giants’ lair, may originally have been a solar weapon that was stolen by giants from Freyr or his circle.

Other aspects of *Prk.* find parallel in Old Norse texts. As the following paragraphs show, Old Norse analogues exist for (1) the quest to the land of giants for a precious object, (2) the gods’ characterization, (3) Prymr’s desire to marry Freyja:

(1) The gods rely on two objects to help them keep the giants at bay: Þórr’s giant-slaying hammer and the youth-giving apples of the goddess Iðunn. Like Mjöllnir,

1 J. McKinnell, ‘Eddic Poetry in Anglo-Scandinavian Northern England’, in J. Graham-Campbell, R. Hall, J. Jesch and D. N. Parsons, ed., *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress, Nottingham and York, 21–30 August 1997* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2001), pp. 327–44.

2 See Finnur Jónsson, ed., *Rímnasafn: samling af de ældste islandske rimer*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Møller, 1905–12), I, 278–89; E. M. Meletinsky, *The Elder Edda and Early Forms of the Epic* (Trieste: Ed. Parnaso, 1998), pp. 94–95; L. Colwill and Haukur Þorgeirsson, ed. and trans., *The Bearded Bride: A Critical Edition of Prymlur* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2020).

Iðunn and her apples are stolen by a giant, but recovered with Loki's help. The myth of Iðunn's abduction is told in *SnESkáld* (I, G56, pp. 1–2) and in the skaldic poem *Hauſt.* contained therein (22, pp. 30–33). It recalls Loki's flight and the gods' assembly in *Brk*:

The gods Óðinn, Loki and Hœnir are travelling and mysteriously unable to cook an ox. An eagle in the tree above claims responsibility and says the ox will cook if they let it eat its fill. They agree, but Loki, enraged at the eagle's appetite, strikes it with a pole. The pole sticks to the eagle and Loki sticks to the pole. The eagle flies off with Loki dangling below and being dashed against stones and trees. Loki is freed only when he agrees to lure Iðunn outside Ásgarðr with her apples. Loki returns home and does so by urging her to compare her apples with others he has found in a forest. The giant Þjazi arrives in eagle form and abducts her. Lacking Iðunn's apples, the gods age. They call an assembly and Loki's involvement is revealed. Terrified, he agrees to search for Iðunn in the land of giants, if Freyja will lend him her falcon shape (*valshamr*). She apparently does, and Loki flies off. When he arrives at Þjazi's, the giant is out fishing, so Loki turns Iðunn into a nut and flies off again. When Þjazi discovers this he gives chase in eagle form. But the gods kindle a huge fire once Loki arrives back. The fire destroys the eagle's feathers and Þjazi drops down into Ásgarðr, where the gods kill him.

(2) *Brk*'s affectionate comedy relies greatly on prior knowledge of the gods' traditional attributes and traditional gender norms. The comedy of Þórr as 'drag queen' is magnified by knowledge of his über-masculinity, and by the expectation that the proposed masquerade will be hard to bring off. Here is the familiar Þórr—the slow-witted scourge of giants, all bushy beard, fiery eyes and voracious appetite—temporarily emasculated. To be weaponless is a shocking experience for him. He is without his hammer once elsewhere in Norse myth, but finds other magical tools to compensate: Loki, having been caught flying in Freyja's falcon form by the giant Geirrøðr, was released only after swearing to get Þórr to come to Geirrøðr's courts without his hammer or girdle of might; this he does, but Þórr receives advice, a pair of iron gloves and a pole from the giantess Gríðr, Víðarr's mother, with the help of which he kills Geirrøðr (*SnESkáld*, I, 18, pp. 24–30, including the skaldic *Þórsdrápa* 'Þórr's Poem').

Loki, unlike Þórr, seems often to have taken the form of a woman—hence his aptitude for the role of bridesmaid in *Brk*. Loki's quick wits, evident in *Ls.*, are never displayed to better effect than in *Brk*. Loki's role in Norse myth is complex. On the one hand, he gets the gods into trouble with the giants, instigates Baldr's death, fathers Fenrir and the Miðgarðsormr, and fights Heimdallr at Ragnarok. On the other, he usually rescues the situation, as when he thwarts the giant-builder's designs on Freyja (see below) or pacifies the vengeful giantess Skaði by making her laugh (*SnESkáld*, I, G56, p. 2). Despite their antagonism in *Ls.*, Loki and Þórr are paired elsewhere in Norse literature: they are companions on a visit to the giant Útgardla-Loki (who, however, is presumably some manifestation of Loki as antagonist) as told in *SnEGylf* (44, pp. 37–44), and in *Hauſt*. Loki is *Þórs rúni* 'Þórr's confidant' (*SnESkáld*, I, 22, p. 32).

Freyja, the beautiful and reputedly promiscuous Vanir goddess, wears the wondrous Brísingamen ('torc [or necklace] of the Brísingar') and drives a chariot pulled by cats.

In this regard she is the opposite of the manly Pórr with his goat-drawn chariot. But she also has a sterner side: she receives half the slaughtered warriors, and Óðinn the other half (*Grm.* 14); Pórr, by contrast, is the god of farmers. Her power is evident in the cracking of the Brísingamen and the shaking of Ásgarðr when she rejects marriage to Prymr.

(3) Prymr is elsewhere just a name, but he is not the only giant to want Freyja. According to *SnESkáld* (I, 17, p. 20), the drunken giant Hrungnir declared that he would, among other things, take Freyja and Sif home with him. Furthermore, *SnEGylf* (42, pp. 34–36) tells the story, probably alluded to in *Vsp.* 26, of a builder contracted by the gods to single-handedly rebuild Ásgarðr's wall in one winter in return for the sun, the moon and Freyja. The builder alarms the gods by working ahead of schedule with, thanks to Loki, the help of a marvellous stallion. Loki rescues matters by turning himself into a mare and distracting the stallion, so that the builder cannot meet his deadline. The builder flies into a giant-rage, whereupon Pórr kills him. Loki then gives birth to Óðinn's eight-legged horse, Sleipnir.

Prk.'s burlesque, deft characterization, artful parallelism and swift, economic style make it the height of Eddic humour and, for the modern reader, one of the best medieval comedies.

Synopsis

Pórr awakes and is angry to find his hammer missing (1). He tells Loki of the extraordinary theft (2). They go to the beautiful goddess Freyja, and Pórr asks her to lend him her feather-coat (3). She agrees willingly (4), and Loki uses it to fly to the land of giants (5). Prymr, the lord of the giants, who is sitting on a grave-mound (6), asks why Loki has come. Loki asks Prymr whether he has hidden Pórr's hammer (7). Prymr says he has and that it will not be recovered until Freyja is brought to him as his bride (8).

Loki returns to the courts of the gods (9), and is commanded by Pórr to tell his news quickly (10). Loki does so (11), and the pair return to Freyja, whom Pórr commands to come with him to the land of giants (12). She refuses, the hall shaking and the Brísingamen fracturing at her disdainful snort (13). Consequently, the gods try to think of another plan (14). The prescient god Heimdallr proposes dressing up Pórr as Freyja in bridal attire (15–16). Pórr refuses because the gods would think him effeminate (17), but Loki reminds him that the giants will occupy Ásgarðr, home of the gods, if he fails to get his hammer back (18). So Pórr is dressed up to look like Freyja as a bride (19), and Loki says he will accompany him as bridesmaid (20).

The pair set off for the land of giants, with rocks breaking and the earth burning as Pórr's goat-chariot passes by (21). Prymr, sensing their coming, tells his household to prepare the benches (22), and says he has everything he wants, except Freyja (23).

The bridal pair arrive and the bride (Pórr) displays a prodigious appetite, eating an ox, eight salmon and all the delicacies meant for the women (24). Prymr is astonished

(25), but the bridesmaid (Loki) explains that, in her eagerness to come, Freyja had not eaten for eight nights (26). Prymr tries to kiss his bride, but upon bending down under her veil is shocked by her fiery eyes and springs back (27). The bridesmaid explains that Freyja had not slept for eight nights either (28). Prymr's sister (a giantess) enters and requests a gift from the bride in return for her affection (29). Prymr has the hammer brought in and laid in the bride's lap to consecrate the union (30).

At once, Þórr's heart rejoices when he recognizes his hammer. He slays Prymr first and then his family (31). Prymr's sister gets a hammer's blow, rather than the gift she had requested. Thus Þórr recovered his hammer (32).

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Prymskviða

1. Reiðr var þá Vingþórr, er hann vaknaði
ok sins hamars um saknaði;
skegg nam at hrista, skor nam at dýja,
réð Jarðar burr um at þreifask.
2. Ok hann þat orða alls fyrst um kvað:
'Heyrðu nú, Loki, hvat ek nú mæli,
er eigi veit jarðar hvergi
né upphimins — Áss er stolinn hamri!'
3. Gengu þeir fagra Freyju túna,
ok hann þat orða alls fyrst um kvað:
'Muntu mér, Freyja, fjaðrhams ljá,
ef ek minn hamar mættak hitta?'
4. Freyja kvað:
'Þó mynda ek gefa þér, þótt ór gulli væri,
ok þó selja, at væri ór silfri!'
5. Fló þá Loki, fjaðrhamr dunði,
unz fyr utan kom Ása garða
ok fyr innan kom jötna heima.
6. Prymr sat á haugi, þursa dróttinn,
greyjum sínum gullbønd snöri
ok mörum sínum mōn jafnaði.
7. Prymr kvað:
'Hvat er með Ásum? Hvat er með álfum?
Hví ertu einn kominn í Jötunheima?
'Illt er með Ásum, illt er með álfum.
Hefir þú Hlórriða hamar um fólginn?'
8. 'Ek hefi Hlórriða hamar um fólginn
áttu röstum fyr jörð neðan;
hann engi maðr aptr um heimtir,
nema fóeri mér Freyju at kván!'
9. Fló þá Loki, fjaðrhamr dunði,
unz fyr utan kom jötna heima
ok fyr innan kom Ása garða;
mætti hann Þór miðra garða,
ok hann þat orða alls fyrst um kvað:

The Lay of Prymr

1. Angry¹ then was Vingþórr,² when he awoke
and missed his hammer;³
his beard shuddered,⁴ his hair shook,⁵
Jörð's son⁶ groped around himself.
2. And he spoke these words first of all:⁷
'Listen now, Loki, to what I now say,
it's unknown anywhere on earth
or in sky above — the Áss⁸ has been robbed of his hammer!'
3. They went to fair Freyja's dwellings,
and he⁹ spoke these words first of all:
'Will you lend me your feather-skin,¹⁰ Freyja,
[to see] if I can find my hammer?'
4. Freyja said:
'I would give it to you even if it were made of gold,
and grant it even if it were made of silver!'
5. Then Loki flew¹¹ — the feather-skin resounded —
until he came outside the Æsir's courts
and he came inside the giants' lands.¹²
6. Prymr sat on a grave-mound,¹³ the lord of giants,
he twisted gold bands¹⁴ for his bitches,
and evenly trimmed manes for his horses.
7. Prymr said:
'How is it with the Æsir? How is it with the elves?¹⁵
Why have you come alone into Jötunheimar?¹⁶
'It's ill with the Æsir, it's ill with the elves.
Have you hidden Hlórriði's¹⁷ hammer?"
8. 'I've hidden Hlórriði's hammer
eight leagues¹⁸ beneath the earth;
no man shall get it back,
unless he fetches me Freyja for a wife!'
9. Then Loki flew — the feather-skin resounded —
until he came outside the giants' lands
and he came inside the Æsir's courts;
he met Þórr amid the courts,
and he¹⁹ spoke these words first of all:

10. ‘Hefir þú erindi sem erfiði?
 Segðu á lopti löng tíðindi!
 Opt sitjanda sögur um fallask,
 ok liggjandi lygi um bellir!’
11. ‘Hefi ek erfiði ok örindi:
 Þrymr hefir þinn hamar, þursa dróttinn;
 hann engi maðr aprí um heimtir,
 nema honum fceri Freyju at kván!’
12. Ganga þeir fagra Freyju at hitta,
 ok hann þat orða alls fyrst um kvað:
 ‘Bittu þik, Freyja, brúðar líni!
 Vit skulum aka tvau í Jötunheima!’
13. Reið varð þá Freyja ok fnásæði,
 allr Ása salr undir bifðisk,
 stókk þat it mikla men Brísinga:
 ‘Mik veiztu verða vergjarnasta,
 ef ek ek með þér í Jötunheima!’
14. Senn váru Æsir allir á þingi,
 ok Ásynjur allar á máli,
 ok um þat réðu ríkir tívar,
 hvé þeir Hlórriða hamar um sætti.
15. Þá kvað þat Heimdallr, hvítastr Ása —
 vissi hann vel fram, sem Vanir aðrir:
 ‘Bindu vér Þór þá brúðar líni,
 hafi hann it mikla men Brísinga!
16. ‘Látum und honum hrynjá lukla
 ok kvennváðir um kné falla,
 en á brjósti breiða steina,
 ok hagliga um høfuð typpum!’
17. Þá kvað þat Þórr, þrúðugr Áss:
 ‘Mik munu Æsir argan kalla,
 ef ek bindask læt brúðar líni!’
18. Þá kvað þat Loki, Laufeyjar sonr:
 ‘Pegi þú, Þórr, þeira orða!
 Þegar munu jötnar Ásgarð búa,
 nema þú þinn hamar þér um heimtir!’

10. 'Have you a message worth the hardship?
Tell your long tidings in the air!²⁰
Stories often slip the mind of a sitting man,
and a lying one deals in lies!'
11. 'I have [both] hardship and a message:
Prymr has your hammer, the lord of giants;
no man will get it back,
unless he fetches him Freyja for a wife!'
12. They went to find fair Freyja,
and he²¹ said these words first of all:
'Bind²² yourself, Freyja, in a bride's linen!
We two shall drive into Jötunheimar!'
13. Freyja became incensed then and snorted,
at which all the hall of the Æsir shook;
the great torc of the Brísingar²³ fractured.²⁴
'You'd know me to be most man-eager,²⁵
if I drive with you into Jötunheimar!'
14. At once the Æsir were all in assembly,
and the Ásynjur²⁶ all in consultation,
and the powerful deities deliberated about it,²⁷
how they might recover Hlórriði's hammer.
15. Then Heimdallr, whitest of Æsir,²⁸ said this —
he knew the future well, like other Vanir:²⁹
'Let's bind³⁰ Þórr, then, in a bride's linen,
let him have the great torc of the Brísingar!'
16. 'Let's have keys clanging³¹ at his belt,
and women's skirts falling over his knees,
and on his breast broad jewels,
and top it off tidily about his head!'³²
17. Then Þórr, the powerful Áss, said this:
'The Æsir will call me perverted,³³
if I let myself be bound in a bride's linen!'
18. Then Loki, Laufey's son, said this:
'Be silent, Þórr, [enough] of those words!
At once will the giants occupy Ásgarðr,³⁴
unless you bring home your hammer!'

19. Bundu þeir Þór þá brúðar líni
ok inu mikla meni Brísinga,
létu und honum hrynda lukla,
ok kvennváðir um kné falla,
en á brjósti breiða steina,
ok hagliga um høfuð typþu!
20. Þá kvað Loki, Laufeyjar sonr:
'Mun ek ok með þér ambótt vera,
vit skulum aka tvau í Jötunheima!'
21. Senn váru hafrar heim um reknir,
skyndir at skóklum, skyldu vel renna;
björg brotnuðu, brann jörð loga,
ók Óðins sonr í Jötunheima!
22. Þá kvað þat Prymr, þursa dróttinn:
'Standið up, jötnar, ok stráið bekki!
Nú fóera mér Freyju at kván,
Njarðar dóttur, ór Nóatúnnum!'
23. 'Ganga hér at garði gullhyrnðar kýr,
œxn alsvartir, jötni at gamni;
fjölð á ek meiðma, fjölð á ek menja,
einnar mér Freyju ávant þíkkir!'
24. Var þar at kveldi um komit snimma,
ok fyr jötna ól fram borit;
einn át oxa, átta laxa,
krásir allar, þær er konur skyldu;
drakk Sifjar verr sáld þrjú mjáðar!
25. Þá kvað þat Prymr, þursa dróttinn:
'Hvar sáttu brúðir bíta hvassara?
Sáka ek brúðir bíta breiðara,
né inn meira mjóð mey um drekka!'
26. Sat in alsnotra ambótt fyrir,
er orð um fann við jötuns máli:
'Át vætr Freyja átta nótum,
svá var hon óðfús í Jötunheima!'
27. Laut und línu, lysti at kyssa,
en hann útan stókk endlangan sal:
'Hví eru qondótt augu Freyju?
Þikki mér ór augum eldr um brenna!'

19. Then they bound Þórr in a bride's linen
and the great torc of the Brísingar;
they had keys clanging at his belt,
and women's skirts falling round his knees,
and on his breast broad jewels,
and they topped it off tidily about his head!
20. Then Loki, Laufey's son, said:
'I shall also be with you as bridesmaid,
we two³⁵ shall drive into Jötunheimar!'
21. At once the goats were driven home,
hurried to the traces, they had to run hard;³⁶
rocks broke, earth burnt with flame,³⁷
Óðinn's son drove into Jötunheimar!
22. Then Þrymr, lord of giants, said this:
'Stand up, giants, and strew the benches!³⁸
Now they're fetching me Freyja for a wife,
Njörðr's daughter, from Nóatún!³⁹
23. 'Golden-horned cows walk here in the courtyard,
all-black oxen,⁴⁰ for a giant's amusement;
I have a host of treasures, I have a host of torcs,
it seems to me I lack only Freyja!'
24. They came there early in the evening,
and ale was brought forth for the giants;
he alone ate an ox,⁴¹ eight salmon,
all the delicacies which women should [eat];
Sif's man⁴² drank three casks of mead!
25. Then Þrymr, lord of giants, said this:
'Where have you seen brides⁴³ bite more keenly?
I've not seen brides bite more broadly,
nor a maiden drink more mead!'
26. The all-wise bridesmaid sat in front,
who found words in answer to the giant's speech:
'Freyja ate nothing for eight nights,
so mad keen was she [to come] into Jötunheimar!'
27. He⁴⁴ bent down under the linen,⁴⁵ desired to kiss her,
but [then] he sprang back the length of the hall:
'Why are Freyja's eyes frightful?
It seems to me that fire burns from her eyes!'

28. Sat in alsnotra ambótt fyrir,
 er orð um fann við jötuns máli:
 ‘Svaf vætr Freyja átta nótum,
 svá var hon óðfús í Jötunheima!’
29. Inn kom in arma jötna systir,
 hin er brúðfjár biðja þorði:
 ‘Láttu þér af hóndum hringa rauða,
 ef þú qöflask vill ástir mínar,
 ástir mínar, alla hylli!’
30. Þá kvað þat Þrymr, þursa dróttinn:
 ‘Berið inn hamar brúði at vígja,
 leggið Mjöllni í meyjar kné,
 vígið okkr saman Várar hendi!’
31. Hló Hlórriða hugr í brjósti
 er harðhugaðr hamar um þekði;
 Prym drap hann fyrstan, þursa dróttin,
 ok ætt jötuns alla lamði!
32. Drap hann ina qoldnu jötna systur,
 hin er brúðfjár of beðit hafði;
 hon skell um hlaut fyr skillinga,
 en hogg hamars fyr hringa fjolð!
- Svá kom Óðins sonr endr at hamri.

28. The all-wise bridesmaid sat in front,
who found words in answer to the giant's speech:
 'Freyja didn't sleep for eight nights,⁴⁶
so mad keen was she [to come] into Jötunheimar!'
29. In came the wretched sister of giants,⁴⁷
the one who dared to ask for a bride-fee:⁴⁸
 'Let red rings⁴⁹ [fall] from your arms,
 if you want to win my affection,
 my affection, all favour!'
30. Then Þrymr, lord of giants, said this:
'Bring in the hammer to hallow the bride,
 lay Mjöllnir in the maiden's lap⁵⁰
hallow⁵¹ us both together by Vár's hand!'⁵²
31. Hlórriði's heart laughed in his chest
when, hard-hearted, he recognized his hammer;
 he slew Þrymr first, the lord of giants,
 and all the giant's family he laid low!
32. He slew the aged sister of giants,
the one who had asked for a bride-fee;
she received a shattering blow instead of shillings,⁵³
 and a hammer's stroke instead of a host of rings!

Thus Óðinn's son came by his hammer again.

Textual Apparatus to *Prymskviða*

Prymskviða] The rubricated title of this poem is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this reading therefore relies on the transcription therein

1/1 *Reiðr*] The first letter is large and rubricated, but faded, in R

2/5 *eigi*] Late, paper manuscripts have *engi*

7/2 *illt er með álfum*] R absent

9/3 *unz*] R *oc vnz*

9/9 *hann þat*] R *þat hann*

11/1–2 *erfiði ok örindi*] R *örindi. erfidi.* *oc* with scribal indication that the first two words should be interchanged

13/2 *fnásaði*] R *fnasasi*

19] This stanza is heavily abbreviated in R

22/3 *Standið*] R *hvar sattu standit up*, with the first two words (cf. st. 25) marked for deletion

22/5 *föra*] So one paper manuscript (*föra þeir*); R *færið*. R's imperative pl. form is defensible, but less natural and probably a mistaken repetition of the preceding verb termination

25/6 *breiðara*] R *en breiðara*

26/2 *fyrir*] R *fyr*

27/3 *stgkk*] Preceded by *co* in R, but marked for deletion

27/8] *eldr um*] R absent; a paper manuscript has *eldr of*

28/1–4] Expansion of R's abbreviation *Sat in al. s. a. f. s. m.*

28/6–8] Abbreviated in R

Notes to the Translation

1 The adjective *reiðr* 'angry' might participate in this line's alliteration, if an East Norse or preliterary West Norse form, **vreiðr*, lies behind it; but cf. *reiðr* in *Brk.* 13, which does not alliterate.

2 Þórr. This title, which means 'Swing(ing)-Þórr', 'Battle-Þórr' or 'Consecration-Þórr', probably reflects the god's close association with his hammer, Mjöllnir.

3 Þórr was so attached to his hammer that it even returned to his hand when thrown (*SnESkáld I*, 35, p. 42).

4 Or 'began to shudder'.

5 Or 'began to shake'.

6 Þórr was the son of *Jörð* 'Earth', a giantess. There is irony to her mention here, given where the hammer turns out to be hidden.

7 Cf. *Br.* 5 [6], *Od.* 3.

8 Sg. of *Æsir*, here Þórr.

- 9 Pórr.
- 10 A garment that confers the power of flight. According to *SnEskáld* (G56, p. 2, 18, p. 24), Freyja had a *valshamr* ‘falcon-skin/form’ in which Loki flew; see also *Haust*. 12. A similar Old English noun, *feðerhama*, is used, among other things, of the devil’s wings.
- 11 It is Loki, not Pórr, who wears the feather-skin.
- 12 Literally, ‘homes’.
- 13 The significance of sitting on a grave-mound is uncertain, because in Old Norse literature it is associated with both the exalted and the lowly: kings did it in honour of their ancestors or wives buried therein, but so did herdsmen. We may wonder whether Þrymr is sitting on a mound that conceals Porr’s hammer, hidden ‘eight leagues beneath the earth’ (st. 8).
- 14 Collars.
- 15 Cf. *Vsp*. 50.
- 16 ‘Giant Homes/Worlds’.
- 17 Pórr’s.
- 18 A *röst*, here translated ‘league’, was literally the distance between two ‘rests’.
- 19 Pórr.
- 20 I.e., while Loki is still in the air, before he lands; cf. Loki’s alias *Loptr* ‘Airy (One)’.
- 21 Pórr.
- 22 I.e., dress.
- 23 Or perhaps ‘torc of blazes’ (ON *brísingr* ‘blaze’). This marvellous neck-band is owned by Freyja, but may derive ultimately from the *Menet* necklace of Hathor, an ancient Egyptian goddess. The Old Norse term *men Brísinga* ‘torc [or necklace] of the Brísingar’ Fiery Ones/Blazers/blazes’ occurs elsewhere only in the inverted form *Brísingamen* in *SnEGylf* and *SnEskáld*. The torc is, however, probably mentioned, without being so named, in other Norse texts. According to the start of the fourteenth(?)-century *Sqrla þáttr* ‘Tale of Sqrlí’, Freyja obtained a *gullmen* ‘gold torc’ by agreeing to sleep with the four dwarves (the Brísingar?) who created it; later it was stolen from her by Loki at Óðinn’s behest, although she did regain it. The same, or a closely related, story is alluded to in *Haust*. 9 in the ‘Loki’-kenning *Brísings girðiþíófr* ‘thief of the Brísingr-girdle’. A form of the same treasure, strangely described as a *hafnýra* ‘sea-kidney’, might also have been fought over by Loki and Heimdallr in the form of seals, to judge from the tenth-century *Húsdr.* (st. 2). It might additionally be referred to in *Ls*. 20 as a gift from Heimdallr to the goddess Gefjun. In the Old English poem *Beowulf* (ll. 1197–1214) it appears as the *Brosinga mene*, which a certain *Hama* (cf. *Heimdallr*?) took to *pære byrhtan byrig* ‘to the bright stronghold’, and which was subsequently worn by Hygelac, Beowulf’s uncle. Cf. the implicit torc of *Mengloð* ‘Torc/Necklace Glad (One)’ in *Svipdagsmál*.
- 24 Or ‘fell down’.
- 25 Freyja had a reputation for promiscuity; see e.g. *Ls*. 30–33, *Hdl*. 6 and *Sqrla þáttr*.
- 26 Goddesses.
- 27 Cf. *BDr*. 1.
- 28 Or ‘brightest/most radiant of Æsir’, but Heimdallr’s whiteness is confirmed by *SnEGylf* (27, p. 25); note also *Ls*. 20. The description might imply effeminacy.
- 29 Or perhaps, since Heimdallr is usually one of the Æsir, the sense is ‘... as the Vanir otherwise (could)’ or ‘... like those others, the Vanir’. Possibly the poet did not see a fundamental distinction between the two groups of gods, or drew on a tradition now obscured or lost.

- Perhaps he was aware of an ancient tradition whereby all the gods were considered to be the kin of a Vanir god called Ingvi-Freyr; see *Haust*. 10. Prescience is not limited to the Vanir, as Frigg is said to know all fates in *Ls.* 29.
- 30 I.e., dress.
- 31 Or perhaps ‘dangling’.
- 32 Probably by putting a head-dress on his head; cf. *Prk.* 27.
- 33 ON *argr* is a strongly pejorative adjective denoting perverse deviance from one’s rightful nature. The word could be used, among other things, to brand a man as effeminate for wearing women’s clothes, as cowardly in battle and, worst of all, as willingly being the ‘female’ partner in a homosexual act. There could be no more offensive word for the ultra-masculine Pórr. Cf. *Hrbl.* 27, *Ls.* 23–24, the related noun *ergi* ‘sexual perversion’ in *FSk.* 36, and *HH. II* 1 pr. and 2, where Helgi wears women’s clothing.
- 34 ‘God Yard/Enclosure’, abode of the gods.
- 35 Loki’s use of the neut. pl. form *tvau* ‘(we) two’ classifies either himself or Pórr as female. Cf. *Prk.* 12, where *tvau* is unremarkable.
- 36 Pórr’s chariot is drawn by two goats. See *Hym.* 7.
- 37 Cf. *Haust.* 16, *Hdl.* 49(?).
- 38 Hall benches were covered with fresh straw for the arrival of guests.
- 39 ‘Ship Towns’, home of Njorðr.
- 40 Cf. *Hym.* 18.
- 41 Or ‘He ate one ox’. The eater is Pórr. Cf. *Hym.* 15.
- 42 Pórr.
- 43 The pl. is puzzling.
- 44 Prymr.
- 45 Presumably a linen headdress, perhaps with a veil.
- 46 This line lacks alliteration in the Old Norse, and therefore is probably corrupt.
- 47 A giantess.
- 48 A gift from the bride to the groom’s family.
- 49 Probably golden arm-rings. For the likely meaning of *rauðr* ‘red’ here, see note to *Vkv.* 5.
- 50 *Mjöllnir* ‘Miller/Crusher’, Pórr’s hammer, is an obviously phallic object. Its placement in the maiden’s lap might symbolize the marriage’s physical consummation. The Eyrarland image, a bronze figurine from medieval Iceland, possibly shows Pórr holding a phallus-like *Mjöllnir*.
- 51 The verb *víga* ‘to bless, consecrate, hallow’ is also used of Pórr’s consecration of his goats and of Baldr’s funeral pyre in *SnEGylf* (44, p. 37; 49, p. 46), and of his blessing of runes or runic monuments. Prymr might also be unintentionally inviting his own doom, since *víga* may also have had overtones of ‘consign to perdition’.
- 52 Vár ‘Vow (of peace or fidelity)’ is a goddess, details of whom survive in *SnEGylf* (35, p. 29): the ninth goddess, she hears people’s oaths and private agreements between men and women, and punishes those who break them.
- 53 Quite possibly coin- or moon-shaped metal discs decorating Freyja’s torc.

Vǫlundarkviða

Vǫlundarkviða (*Vkv.*) ‘The Lay of Vǫlundr’ survives complete only in **R** (fol. 18r–19v), and derivative paper manuscripts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first five and a half sentences of the prose prologue, however, also appear at the end of the last fol. (6v) of **A**, where they follow *Hym*. The poem’s title comes from the paper manuscripts.

The verses of *Vkv.* are in a free form of *fornyrðislag*, the number of lines per stanza varying between two and seven. Consequently, it is not always clear where one stanza ends and the next begins. Modern editions vary in this respect and in their stanza numbering. The accompanying prose is probably younger than the verse, being partly dependent on it. The poem’s age is uncertain, but indications of influence by late Old English verse may point to an origin, or at least a significant phase of passage, in the ninth- or tenth-century Danelaw of Anglo-Norse England, an area from which other Viking Age pictorial representations of the smith Vǫlundr come.

The two basic stories that form *Vkv.*’s narrative have even earlier origins. First is the arrival, marriage and departure of swan-maidens. Second is the capture of the smith Vǫlundr and his subsequent revenge upon King Níðuðr (a name also spelt *Níðaðr*) and his family. These stories’ ultimate origins are also uncertain, but both occur elsewhere in variant forms that predate the ninth-century settlement of Iceland.

The opening tale of the swan-maidens—their arrival by a lake, and subsequent marriage to and abandonment of men—is the earliest known Western version of an ancient shamanistic story. It is probably of North Eurasian origin and based on observation of the seasonal migration of large water-birds. Versions of it are found as far afield as Siberia, North America, and, as early as c. 300 A.D., China. The original story probably ran as follows:

There was a man at the margin of a lake who saw some girls bathing. They had laid aside the feather-garments in which they had flown along, and left them on the bank. Or more likely he had seen them fly down from the sky in the shape of some migratory waterfowl, and then undress. He took the feather-clothes of the youngest. The others donned their feathers and flew away. But by withholding the clothes of the youngest he forced her to marry him—for how could she fly away without them? [...] The man hid her clothes, and they reared a family. [...] But as soon as the bird-woman regained her powers of flight, her longing for her kind overmastered her, and she flew off with her young ones.¹

¹ A. T. Hatto, ‘The Swan Maiden: A Folk-Tale of North Eurasian Origin?’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24 (1961), 326–52 at 295.

Vkv. is unusual in lacking any apparent theft of the feather-garments, in having not one but three marriages,² and in not mentioning any offspring. It is also the only text to combine the swan-maiden story with that of Völundr's capture and revenge.³

The earliest surviving reference to Völundr (equivalent to OE *Weland/Welund*) is probably a runic inscription on a gold solidus (dated 575–625) found in Germany, which reads simply *wela[n]du*.⁴ However, most early evidence for tales about him comes from pre-Conquest England. These tales may have first reached England with the peoples who migrated from northern Germany, where the legend of Völundr/Weland is thought to have arisen. The fullest Old English reference to this figure—and to counterparts of Níðuðr and Bøðvildr—is in the allusive poem *Deor*, which begins:

Welund him be wurman wræces cunnade,
anhydig eorl earfoþa dreag,
hæfde him to gesiþþe sorge ond longaþ,
wintercealde wræce; wean oft onfond
siþþan hine Niðhad on nede legde,
swoncre seonobende on syllan monn.
Pæs ofereode; þisses swa mæg.

Beadohilde ne wæs hyre broþra deaþ
on sefan swa sar swa hyre sylfre þing,
þæt heo gearolice ongieten hæfde
þæt heo eacen wæs; æfre ne meahthe
þriste gebencan hu ymb þæt sceolde.
Pæs ofereode; þisses swa mæg.

Welund knew exile on account of snakes(?),⁵ the single-minded nobleman endured hardships, had sorrow and longing as his company, winter-cold pain; he often experienced woe after Niðhad [= ON *Níðuðr*] laid constraints on him, supple sinew-bonds on the better man. That passed away; so may this.

For Beadohild [= ON *Bøðvildr*, daughter of Níðuðr] her brothers' death was not as painful to her heart as her own affair, in that she had clearly perceived that she was pregnant; she could not ever consider without fear how it had to turn out. That passed away; so may this.

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- 2 A clue to the antiquity of the marriage of Egill and Qlrún might be the pairing of these names in a runic inscription on a sixth-century buckle found in Bavaria; see T. Looijenga, *Texts and Contexts of the Oldest Runic Inscriptions* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 107, 253–55 and J. McKinnell and R. Simek, with K. Düwel, *Runes, Magic and Religion. A Sourcebook* (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2004), pp. 57–59. Egill is also associated with Qlrún in *Piðreks saga*.
- 3 A fourteenth-century German metrical romance, *Friedrich von Schwaben*, has a hero who calls himself Wieland, a version of the swan-maiden story with three marriages, and the garment-theft motif, but it may derive partly from Norse sources, perhaps including an earlier version of *Vkv.*; see U. Dronke, ed., *The Poetic Edda: Volume II. Mythological Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 259, 286.
- 4 Looijenga, *Texts and Contexts*, p. 308.
- 5 Scholars dispute the precise meaning of *be wurman*. It might be relevant that, in *Vkv.* 17, Völundr's eyes 'reminiscent of the sparkling snake (*orm*)' prompt Níðuðr's wife to have him hamstrung and isolated.

These allusive narrative details are in broad agreement with the fuller account of *Vkv.* Indeed, lexical correspondences between the two poems strongly suggest a genetic link—a possibility increased by *Deor*'s use of a comparable strophic form. Possibly these poems draw upon a common Old English poetic source.

Further details to compare with the story of Vǫlundr in *Vkv.* are carved on the front and lid of a whalebone box, probably from eighth-century Northumbria, now housed in the British Museum. The front of this artefact, known as the Franks (or Auzon) Casket, shows an apparently hamstrung Weland in his smithy. In his left hand he holds a severed head in a pair of tongs upon an anvil, beneath which lies a decapitated body. With his right hand he is either presenting a cup (or perhaps a ring) to, or receiving one from, two women—probably Beadohild and her maid, the latter mentioned in the Old Norse *Piðreks saga af Bern* ‘Saga of Piðrekr of Bern’ (outlined below). To the right, a figure is catching long-necked birds; this is probably Weland’s brother (ON *Egill*) gathering feathers for a magical coat in which the smith will fly away. The box’s lid shows an archer, whom an accompanying runic inscription arguably calls *Ægili*, defending a house occupied by a woman. *Ægili* might be an Anglo-Saxon equivalent of the same *Egill*, whose skill at archery is known from tenth-century Old Norse skaldic verse and from *Piðreks saga*.⁶ If so, the woman could be the Anglo-Saxon equivalent of Qlrún, his swan-maiden wife in *Vkv.* (hence the bird-like designs above and below her). To judge again from *Piðreks saga*, other figures in this scene might include his son, from whose head he has shot an apple in a precursor of the William Tell story, and a flying Weland with hamstrung leg, who is perhaps being shot at. Additionally, it is possible that the back panel of the Franks Casket shows Weland presenting Niðhad with bowls made from the skulls of his sons.

Other Old English poems and place-names confirm Weland’s fame and skill. The heroic poems *Beowulf* and *Waldere* (which also mentions Niðhad and Weland’s son, Widia) tell us that he made marvellous swords and armour. King Alfred substituted Weland’s name for that of the virtuous Roman consul Fabricius (cf. Latin *faber* ‘smith’) in his *Metres of Boethius* (Metre 10). Wayland’s Smithy, an isolated megalithic tomb in Oxfordshire, was so called at least as early as the mid-ninth century; and several other Old English place-names not far from this tomb may suggest local interest in Beadohild and Widia. Weland’s fame, and that of Wade (OE *Wada*, ME *Wade*, ON *Vaði*)—father of Weland’s equivalent, Velent, in *Piðreks saga*—lasted long after the Norman Conquest in England, and elsewhere in Europe.

Vǫlundr’s flying escape is perhaps shown in four stone carvings from Viking Age northern England (modern Leeds, Sherburn and Bedale). These damaged carvings appear to show a man strapped into a bird-like apparatus, as in *Piðreks saga*. One carving may show a smith’s tools beneath this figure and a woman (Bǫðvildr?)

⁶ For other interpretations of *Ægili* and the scene on the Franks Casket, however, see G. Cocco, ‘The Bowman Who Takes the Lid Off the Franks Casket’, in M. E. Ruggerini and V. Szőke, ed., *Studi anglo-norreni in onore di John S. McKinnell: ‘He hafað sundorgeczynd’* (Cagliari: CUEC, 2009), pp. 15–31.

above him. Elsewhere, the Ardre VIII stone from Gotland, dated c. 800, shows similar iconography and makes clearer reference to the smith's vengeance: a bird-like form, its beak resting against the back of a woman, is shown leaving a tool-filled smithy, to the right of which are two headless bodies.

These allusive early records testify to the familiarity of Völundr's story. However, the only full retelling, apart from *Vkv.*, is the thirteenth-century Norwegian *Velents saga smiðs* 'Story of Velent the Smith', part of *Biðreks saga*. This saga is thought to have been largely translated from Low German, but is perhaps also partly based on Old Norse Eddic verse. Briefly, this version of the story runs as follows:

Velent [= *Völundr*] is the son of a Zealand giant called Vaði. Velent learns smithing from a man called Mimir and later from two dwarves. The dwarves try to kill him, but he kills them first and casts himself adrift in a log. It is found by men of the Jutland king Niðungr [= *Niðuðr*], whose protection he asks for and receives. Niðungr discovers Velent's skill at smithing and builds him a smithy. Velent then outdoes the court smith by making the marvellous sword Mimung, a duplicate of which he gives to the king. Velent proceeds to make wonderful treasures.

Shortly before Niðungr is to fight a battle, Velent agrees to fetch a magical 'stone of victory' in return for half the kingdom and marriage to the king's daughter. Unfortunately, in doing so he kills Niðungr's favourite servant, an action the king uses as a pretext to renege on the deal. Velent is exiled as punishment. In vengeance he tries to poison the king, but fails. Niðungr then has Velent's Achilles' tendons cut and builds him another smithy, where Velent makes more wonderful metalwork.

Velent lures the king's two younger sons into walking backwards to visit him. He kills them and buries their bodies under his bellows, but escapes suspicion because their footprints appear to lead away from his smithy. He makes drinking cups from their skulls and assorted tableware for the king's feast from their other bones.

The king's daughter (unnamed), having broken her best gold ring, visits Velent with her maid. He has sex with her and then mends the ring. He then instructs his brother Egill, an expert archer, to collect feathers, from which he makes himself a flying apparatus. He flies off in this and reveals the nature of his vengeance to Niðungr. The king forces Egill to shoot at the flying Velent. Seeing blood fall to the ground, Niðungr thinks Velent has suffered a mortal wound. But the king has been outwitted again. For Velent had earlier told Egill to aim below his left arm, where he would be carrying a bladder filled with the blood of the king's sons. Velent goes home to his family farm. Niðungr dies of sickness and is succeeded by his son Otvin. The princess has a son called Viðga. Velent is reconciled with Otvin and marries the princess.

Despite differences of detail, it is reasonable to conclude that all these texts, from *Deor* to *Biðreks saga*, and the graphical representations refer to the same basic story: the marvellous smith, having been lamed and confined to a smithy by the king, exacts terrible vengeance by beheading the king's sons, making grim objects from their heads, and impregnating the king's daughter, and then flies away.

Vkv.'s presence among the mythic poems of R requires some explanation, though there is palaeographical and orthographical evidence confirming its association with these poems. Unlike the preceding poems, and the following *Alv.*, *Vkv.* refers

to neither gods nor giants. Nor does Snorri refer to it in his *Prose Edda*, although that work's inclusion of the kennings *grjót-Níðuðr* 'rock-Níðuðr' (for the kidnapping giant Þjazi) and *Egils vápn* 'Egill's weapons' (for bows and arrows) indicates knowledge of two of its characters. It seems likely that, despite the prominence of humans in *Vkv.*, this poem owes its presence among the mythic texts to the elvish nature of its main character, Vǫlundr. The alliterative pairing of the words for 'gods/Æsir' and 'elves' in, for example, *Háv.* 159 and *Prk.* 7, which finds parallel in an Old English metrical charm, shows that these two groups were closely associated.

Vkv.'s position in R interrupts what would otherwise be a series of five poems that either focus on Pórr or include him as an important character: *Hrbl.*, *Hym.*, *Ls.*, *Prk.* and *Alv.* Why this is so is unknown, but it has been argued that there are reasons to think that *Vkv.* and *Prk.* are closely associated because of similarities of style, detail and general theme. Chief among these are the poems' shared use of *fornyrðislag* and the story-line—otherwise absent from the *Poetic Edda*—of the theft of a treasured item (a hammer in *Prk.*, a ring in *Vkv.*), its recovery by the original owner, and his vengeance on the thief and the thief's family.

Synopsis

Prose: The poem's main characters are introduced: the Swedish King Níðuðr and his daughter Bǫgvildr; the three brothers Slagfiðr, Egill and Vǫlundr, sons of a Sámi king; and the three swan-maidens (here called valkyries) Hlaðguðr Svanhvít, Hervør Alvitr and Qlrún.

The brothers build a house at Úlfdalir. They discover the swan-maidens on the shore of the nearby lake Úlfvatn. Egill marries Qlrún, Slagfiðr marries Svanhvít and Vǫlundr marries Alvitr. After seven years their wives fly off to seek battles and do not return. Egill and Slagfiðr go in search of their wives, but Vǫlundr—the most skilful man mentioned in old stories—remains at home. There King Níðuðr captures him, as the following poem records.

Verse: Strange young female creatures fly north across *Myrkvið* 'Mirkwood' to fulfil their destiny; they rest on a lake-shore and spin linen (1). One embraces Egill, a second trails (or 'wears') swan feathers, a third embraces Vǫlundr (2). Nine years later, the maidens leave to fulfil their destiny (3). Vǫlundr returns from hunting. Egill skis east in search of Qlrún, Slagfiðr goes south after Svanhvít (4), but Vǫlundr stays at home making jewellery in anticipation of his wife's return (5).

Níðuðr learns that Vǫlundr is alone and sets out by night with warriors (6). On arrival at Vǫlundr's home, they see hundreds of rings (7), one of which they take. Vǫlundr returns from hunting and roasts a bear (8–9). He, a 'prince [or 'compatriot'] of elves', counts his rings and, finding one missing, assumes that his wife has returned and taken it (10). He falls asleep and awakes bound hand and foot (11). He asks who has bound him (13). Níðuðr gloatingly asks him where he got all this gold; Vǫlundr

replies that his family had more when they were united (13–14). He names their wives and their wives' fathers (15).

Níðuðr's wife enters and quietly points out Völundr's unfriendliness (16).

Prose: Níðuðr gave the stolen ring to Bögvildr and bore Völundr's sword.

Verse: Níðuðr's wife continues, noting Völundr's reaction to seeing his enemies wear the ring and the sword. She commands that he be hamstrung and confined to a landing place by the sea (17).

Prose: The queen's orders were carried out and the place of Völundr's isolation, now called Sævarstaðr, is identified as an 'island off the coast there'. On the island Völundr forged treasures for Níðuðr, the only person who dared visit him.

Verse: Völundr says he will not get redress for his losses (18–19). He ceaselessly makes precious things for Níðuðr, whose two young sons run to see them (20). They gaze into the treasure chest (21). Völundr invites them to return the following day for a gift—alone and without telling anyone of their visit (22). They duly return early the next day and look into the chest (23). Völundr beheads and dismembers them, burying their legs in a muddy pool(?) in his smithy and giving Níðuðr silver-cased bowls made from their skulls (24). From their eyes he makes gems as gifts for Níðuðr's wife; from their teeth he fashions brooches for Bögvildr (25).

Bögvildr, who has apparently broken her stolen ring, tells Völundr about it; she dares tell no one else (26). He says he will mend it (27). He gets her so drunk that she falls asleep and has sex with her to avenge himself (28). He, laughing, lifts himself into the air; but Bögvildr leaves the island, weeping for Völundr's departure and her father's anger (29).

Níðuðr's wife enters her husband's hall and asks whether he is awake. From the courtyard he replies that he cannot sleep, that her advice is bad, and that he wants to talk to Völundr (31). He asks Völundr what became of his sons (32). Níðuðr has to swear not to harm Völundr's 'wife', even if she is known to him and pregnant (33). Völundr then tells him what happened to his sons, and that his only daughter Bögvildr is now pregnant (34–36).

Níðuðr is distraught but, despite his anger, cannot hurt Völundr as he hovers high in the sky (37). Völundr lifts himself (higher?) into the air, leaving Níðuðr to sit alone (38). Níðuðr tells his slave Þakkráðr to ask Bögvildr to come to speak to him (39). He asks Bögvildr whether she was alone with Völundr on the island (40). She confirms this, saying it should never have happened, but that she had no power to resist him (41).

Further Reading

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Völundarkviða

Frá Völundi

Níðuðr hét konungr í Svíþjóð. Hann átti tvá sonu ok eina dóttur; hon hét Bœvildr. Bræðr *váru* þrír, synir Finna konungs. Hét einn Slagfiðr, annarr Egill, þriði Völundr. Þeir skriðu ok veiddu dýr. Þeir kvómu í Úlfðali ok gerðu sér þar hús. Þar er vatn er heitir Úlfssjár. Snemma of morgin fundu þeir á vatnsströndu konur þrjár, ok spunnu lín. Þar váru hjá þeim álptarhamir þeira. Þat váru valkyrjur. Þar váru tvær doetr *Hlöðvés* konungs: Hlaðguðr Svanhvít ok Hervor Alvit. In þriðja var Qlrún, Kjárs dóttir af Vallandi. Þeir höfðu þær heim til skála með sér. Fekk Egill Qlrúnar, en Slagfiðr Svanhvítar, en Völundr Alvitrar. Þau bjöggu sjau vetr. Þá flugu þær at vitja víga ok kvómu eigi aptr. Þá skreið Egill at leita Qlrúnar, en Slagfiðr leitaði Svanhvítar, en Völundr sat í Úlfðolum. Hann var hagastr maðr, svá at menn viti, í fornnum sögum. Níðuðr konungr létt hann höndum taka, svá sem hér er um kveðit.

Frá Völundi ok Níðaði

1. Meyjar flugu sunnan Myrkvið í gøgnum,
alvitr ungar, ørlög drýgja;
þær á sævar strönd settusk at hvílask,
drósir suðrœnar dýrt lín spunnu.
2. Ein nam þeira Egil at verja,
fogr mær fira, faðmi ljósum;
ønnur var Svanhvít, svanfjaðrar dró;
en in þriðja, þeira systir,
varði hvítan háls Völundar.
3. Sátu síðan sjau vetr at þat,
en inn átta allan þráðu,
en inn níunda nauðr um skilði;
meyjar fýstusk á myrkvan við,
alvitr ungar, ørlög drýgja.
4. Kom þar af veiði veðreygr skyti;
Slagfiðr ok Egill sali fundu auða;
gengu út ok inn ok um sásks;
austr skreið Egill at Qlrúnu,
en suðr Slagfiðr at Svanhvítu.
5. En einn Völundr sat í Úlfðolum;
hann sló gull rautt við gim fastan,
lukði hann alla lindbauga vel;
svá beið hann sinnar ljóssar
kvánar, ef honum koma gerði.

The Lay of Völundr

About Völundr

There was a king called Níðuðr in Sweden. He had two sons and a daughter; she was called Bögvildr. There were three brothers, sons of the king of the Finnar.¹ One was called Slagfiðr, the second Egill, the third Völundr. They skied and hunted wild beasts. They came to Úlfdalir² and built themselves a house there. There is a lake there called Úlfssjár.³ Early one morning they found three women on the lake's shore,⁴ and they were spinning linen. Their swanskins were beside them.⁵ They were valkyries.⁶ There were two daughters of King Hlöðvér:⁷ Hlaðguðr Svanhvít⁸ and Hervør Alvitr.⁹ The third was Qlrún,¹⁰ daughter of Kjárr from Valland.¹¹ They¹² brought them back to the house with them.¹³ Egill married Qlrún, and Slagfiðr Svanhvít, and Völundr Alvitr. They lived [there] for seven years.¹⁴ Then they¹⁵ flew off to seek battles and did not come back. Then Egill skied in search of Qlrún, and Slagfiðr searched for Svanhvít, but Völundr stayed in Úlfdalir. He was the most skilful man that people know of in old stories. King Níðuðr had him seized, as is told about here.

About Völundr and Níðuðr

1. Maidens flew from the south across Myrkviðr¹⁶
young alien beings,¹⁷ to fulfil their fates;
on a lake's shore they settled to rest themselves,¹⁸
the southern ladies spun precious linen.¹⁹
2. One of them, a fair maid of men,²⁰
enfolded Egill in her bright embrace;
the second was Svanhvít, she trailed swan-feathers,²¹
and the third, their sister,
enfolded Völundr's white neck.
3. They stayed like that then for seven years,
but all the eighth they yearned,
and in the ninth need parted them;²²
the maidens were impelled to the murky wood,²³
young alien beings, to fulfil their fates.²⁴
4. The weather-eyed shooter²⁵ came there from the chase,²⁶
Slagfiðr and Egill found the halls empty;
they went out and in and looked about them;
Egill skied east after Qlrún,
and Slagfiðr south after Svanhvít.
5. But Völundr stayed alone in Úlfdalir;
he beat red gold²⁷ about a firm [ly-set] gem,²⁸
he closed all the snake-[arm-]rings well,²⁹
thus he waited for his radiant wife,
in case she came to him.

6. Þat spyrr Níðuðr, Njára dróttinn,
at einn Völundr sat í Úlfðolum;
nóttum fóru seggir, negldar váru brynjur,
skildir bliku þeira við inn skarða mána.
7. Stigu ór sǫðlum at salar gafti,
gengu inn þaðan endlangan sal;
sá þeir á bast bauga dregna,
sjau hundruð allra, er sá seggr átti.
8. Ok þeir af tóku, ok þeir á létu,
fyr einn útan, er þeir af létu;
kom þar af veiði veðreygr skyti,
Völundr, líðandi um langan veg.
9. Gekk brúnni beru hold steikja;
ár brann hrísi allþurr fura,
viðr inn vindþurri, fyr Völundi.
10. Sat á berfjalli, bauga talði,
álfa ljóði eins saknaði;
hugði hann at hefði Hlögðvés dóttir,
alvitr unga, væri hon aptr komin.
11. Sat hann svá lengi at hann sofnaði,
ok hann vaknaði vilja lauss;
vissi sér á hǫndum høfgar nauðir,
en á fótum fjötur um spenntan.
12. 'Hverir ru jófrar, þeir er á lögðu
bestibrysíma ok mik bundu?'
13. Kallaði nú Níðuðr, Njára dróttinn:
'Hvar gaztu, Völundr, vísi álfa,
vára aura í Úlfðolum?'
14. 'Gull var þar eigi á Grana leiðu,
fjarri hugða ek várt land fjöllum Rínar;
man ek at vér meiri mæti áttum
er vér heil hjú heima várum.
15. 'Hlaðguðr ok Hervor borin var Hlögðvé;
kunn var Qlrún, Kjárs dóttir.'
16. Hon inn um gekk endlangan sal,
stóð á gólfí, stillti røddu;
'Era sá nú hýrr, er ór holti ferr.'

6. Níðuðr, lord of the Njárar,³⁰ learned this,
that Völundr stayed alone in Úlfdalir;
men set out by night, their mail-coats were nailed,
their shields shone with [the light of] the sheared moon.³¹
7. They stepped from their saddles at the hall's gable,
from there they went in the whole length of the hall;
they saw rings strung on a bast-rope,
seven hundred in all, which the man³² owned.
8. And they took them off, and they put them back on,
except for one, which they left off;³³
the weather-eyed shooter came there from the chase,
Völundr, travelling over a long way.
9. He went to roast flesh from a brown she-bear;
quickly with the faggots blazed the very dry fir,
the wind-dried wood, before Völundr.
10. He sat on the bear-skin, counted rings,
the prince of elves³⁴ missed one;
he thought that Hlóðvér's daughter had it,
the young alien being, that she had come back.
11. He sat so long that he fell asleep,
and he awoke robbed of his will;³⁵
he felt heavy constraints³⁶ on his hands,
and a fetter fastened on his feet.³⁷
12. 'Who are the princes, they who have put
a restrictive bast-rope on [me] and bound me?'³⁸
13. Now Níðuðr, lord of the Njárar, called out:
'Where, Völundr, wise one³⁹ of the elves, did you get
our wealth in Úlfdalir?'⁴⁰
14. 'There wasn't gold on Grani's path,'⁴¹
I thought our land far from the mountains of the Rín;⁴²
I remember that we had more treasures
when we were a whole family at home.
15. 'Hlaðguðr and Hervor were born to Hlóðvér;
Ólrún was famous,⁴³ Kjárr's daughter.'
16. She⁴⁴ walked in the whole length of the hall,
stood on the floor, lowered her voice:
'He's not friendly now, the one who comes from the forest.'

Níðuðr konungr gaf dóttur sinni, Bögvildi, gullhring, þann er hann tók af bastinu at Völundar. En hann sjálfr bar sverðit er Völundr átti. En dróttning kvað:

17. 'Tenn honum teygjask er honum er tét sverð
ok hann Bögvildar baug um þekkir;
ámun eru augu ormi þeim inum frána;
sníðið ér hann sina magni
ok setið hann síðan í sævar stqð!'

Svá var gjort, at skornar váru sinar í knéfótum, ok settir í hólm einn er þar var fyrir landi, er hét Sævarstaðr. Þar smíðaði hann konungi alls kyns gørsimar. Engi maðr þorði at fara til hans nema konungr einn.

- Völundr kvað:
18. 'Skinn Níðaði sverð á linda,
þat er ek hvesta sem ek hagast kunna,
ok ek herðak sem mér høgst þótti;
sá er mér, fránn mækir, æ fjarri borinn,
sékkja ek þann Völundi til smiðju borinn.'
19. 'Nú berr Bögvildr brúðar minnar —
bíðka ek þess bót — bauga rauða.'

20. Sat hann, né hann svaf, ávalt, ok hann sló hamri;
vél gørði hann heldr hvatt Níðaði;
drifu ungar tveir á dýr sjá,
synir Níðaðar, í sævar stqð.

21. Kómu þeir til kistu, kröfðu lukla;
opin var illúð er þeir í sá;
fjolð var þar menja, er þeim mögum sýndisk,
at væri gull rautt ok gørsimar.

22. 'Komið einir tveir, komið annars dags!
Ykkr læt ek þat gull um gefit verða!
Segiða meyjum né salþjóðum,
manni øngum, at it mik fyndið!'

23. Snemma kallaði seggr á annan,
bróðir á bróður: 'Gøngum baug sjá!'
Kómu til kistu, kröfðu lukla,
opin var illúð er þeir í litu.

24. Snið af høfuð húna þeira,
ok undir fen fjöturs fœtr um lagði;
en þær skálar er und skørnum váru
sveip hann útan silfri, seldi Níðaði.

King Níðuðr gave his daughter, Bóðvildr, the gold ring, the one which he took from the bast-rope at Völundr's. And he himself bore the sword which Völundr owned.⁴⁵ And the queen said:

17. 'He bares his teeth when the sword is shown to him
and he recognizes Bóðvildr's ring;
his eyes are reminiscent of the sparkling snake;
cut away the strength of his sinews
and then set him on the sea's shore!'⁴⁶

So it was done, in that the sinews behind his knees were cut, and he was set on an islet off the coast there, which was called Sævarstaðr. There he forged for the king treasures of every kind. No one dared go to him, except the king alone.

- Völundr said:
18. 'A sword shines at Níðuðr's belt,⁴⁷
that which I sharpened as skilfully as I knew,
and I tempered as seemed to me most suitable,⁴⁸
that flashing blade is forever borne far from me,
I shall not see it borne to Völundr's smithy.'

19. 'Now Bóðvildr bears my bride's —
I shall not see redress for this — red rings.'

20. He sat, he did not sleep, ever, and he struck with his hammer;
rather quickly he made ingenious items for Níðuðr;
two young ones, sons of Níðuðr,
rushed to see the valuables at the sea's shore.

21. They came to the chest, craved the keys;
ill-will was disclosed⁴⁹ when they looked inside;
there was a host of torcs, which seemed to the boys
to be red gold and treasures.

22. 'Come alone, you two, come tomorrow!⁵⁰
I'll have the gold given to you!
Don't tell the maids or domestics,
any man, that you visited me!'

23. Early, one lad called to the other,
brother to brother: 'Let's go see a ring!'⁵¹
They came to the chest, craved the keys,
ill-will was disclosed when they looked inside.

24. He cut off the cubs' heads,⁵²
and put their legs under the 'fen of the fetter',⁵³
but the bowls which were beneath their hair
he encased in silver, gave them to Níðuðr.⁵⁴

25. En ór augum jarknasteina
sendi hann kunnigri konu Níðaðar;
en ór tönnum tveggja þeira
sló hann brjóstkringlur, sendi Boðvildi.
26. Þá nam Boðvildr baugi at hrósa
er brotit hafði:
'Þoriga ek at segja, nema þér einum!'
27. Völundr kvað:
'Ek bœti svá brest á gulli,
at feðr þínum vegri þíkkir,
ok mœðr þinni miklu betri,
ok sjálfrí þér at sama hófi.'
28. Bar hann hana bjóri, þvíat hann betr kunni,
svá at hon í sessi um sofnaði;
'Nú hefi ek hefnt harma minna,
allra nema einna íviðgjarnra!'
29. 'Vel ek', kvað Völundr, 'verða ek á fitjum,
þeim er mik Níðaðar námu rekkar!'
Hlæjandi Völundr hófsk at lopti;
grátandi Boðvildr gekk ór eyju,
tregði fór friðils ok fqður reiði.
30. Úti stendr kunnig kván Níðaðar,
ok hon inn um gekk endlangan sal;
en hann á salgarð settisk at hvílask:
'Vakir þú, Níðuðr, Njára dróttinn?'
31. 'Vaki ek ávalt, vilja lauss,
sofna ek minnst sízt mína sonu dauða;
kell mik í hofuð, kold eru mér ráð þín,
vilnumk ek þess nú, at ek við Völund dœma.
32. 'Seg þú mér þat, Völundr, vísi álfu:
af heilum hvat varð húnnum mínum?'
33. 'Eiða skaltu mér áðr alla vinna,
at skips borði ok at skjaldar rönd,
at mars bœgi ok at mækis egg,
at þú kveljat kván Völundar,
né brúði minni at bana verðir,
þótt vér kván eigm, þá er þér kunnið,
eða jóð eigm innan hallar!'

25. And from their eyes noble stones⁵⁵
he sent to Níðuðr's cunning wife;
and from the teeth of the two
he fashioned breast-rings,⁵⁶ sent them to Bøðvildr.
26. Then Bøðvildr began to praise the ring
which she had broken:⁵⁷
'I dare not speak of it, except to you alone!'
27. Völundr said:
'I can fix the fracture in the gold,
so that to your father it will seem fairer,
and to your mother much better,
and to you yourself in equal measure.'
28. He overbore her with beer, because he knew better,
so that she fell asleep on the seat;
'Now I have avenged my hurts,
all except a few malicious ones!'⁵⁸
29. 'I'd be well,' said Völundr, 'were I to get on my webbed feet,⁵⁹
those which Níðuðr's men took from me!'⁶⁰
Laughing, Völundr raised himself aloft,⁶¹
weeping, Bøðvildr went from the island,
grieved for her lover's going and her father's wrath.
30. Outside stands Níðuðr's cunning wife,
and she walked in the whole length of the hall;
but he⁶² had settled in the hall-yard⁶³ to rest:
'Are you awake, Níðuðr, lord of the Njárar?'⁶⁴
31. 'I'm always awake, robbed of will,⁶⁵
I sleep scarcely at all since the deaths of my sons;⁶⁶
my head is chilled, your counsels are cold to me;⁶⁷
I wish now for this, that I might speak with Völundr.
32. 'Tell me this, Völundr, wise one of the elves:
what happened to my healthy cubs?'
33. 'First you must swear me all oaths,
by ship's side and by shield's rim,
by horse's shoulder and by sword's edge,
that you won't torment Völundr's wife,⁶⁸
nor be the death of my bride,
even if we⁶⁹ have a wife who is known to you,
or have a child within your hall!'

34. 'Gakk þú til smiðju, þeirar er þú gørðir,
þar fiðr þú belgi blóði stokna;
sneið ek af hófuð húna þinna
ok undir fen fjoturs foetr um lagðak!
35. 'En þær skálar er und skórum váru
sveip ek utan silfri, senda ek Níðaði;
en ór augum jarknasteina
senda ek kunnigri kván Níðaðar!
36. 'En ór tónum tveggja þeira
sló ek brjóstkringlur, senda ek Bøðvildi;
nú gengr Bøðvildr barni aukin,
eingadóttir ykkur beggja!'
37. 'Mæltira þú þat mál, er mik meirr tregi,
né ek þik vilja, Vølundr, verr um nítá;
erat svá maðr hár at þik af hesti taki,
né svá qflugr at þik neðan skjóti,
þar er þú skollir við ský uppi!'
38. Hlæjandi Vølundr hófsk at lopti;
en ókátr Níðuðr sat þá eptir.
39. 'Upp rístu, Þakkráðr, þræll minn inn bezti,
bið þú Bøðvildi, meyna bráhvítu,
ganga fagrvarið við fqður rœða!'
40. 'Er þat satt, Bøðvildr, er sogðu mér:
sátuð it Vølundr saman í hólmi?'
41. 'Satt er þat, Níðaðr, er sagði þér:
sátu vit Vølundr saman í hólmi,
eina ogurstund — æva skyldi!
Ek vætr honum vinna kunnak,
ek vætr honum vinna máttak!'

34. ‘Go to the smithy, the one that you made,
there you’ll find a bellows⁷⁰ spattered with blood;
I cut off the heads of your cubs
and laid their legs under the “fen of the fetter”!
35. ‘And the bowls which were beneath their hair
I encased in silver, I sent⁷¹ them to Níðuðr;
and from their eyes noble stones
I sent to Níðuðr’s cunning wife!
36. ‘And from the teeth of those two
I fashioned breast-rings, I sent them to Bœðvildr;
now Bœðvildr walks big⁷² with child,
the only daughter of you both!⁷³
37. ‘You couldn’t utter words which would grieve me more,
[and] I would not deny you, Völundr, worse;⁷⁴
no man is so tall that he might take you from a horse,⁷⁵
nor so strong that he might shoot you from below,
there where you hover up near the clouds!⁷⁶
38. Laughing, Völundr raised himself aloft,
but unhappy Níðuðr sat behind then.
39. ‘Get up, Þakkráðr, my best slave,
ask Bœðvildr, the bright-browed girl,
to go fairly dressed to speak with her father!⁷⁷
40. ‘Is it true, Bœðvildr, what they told me:
Did you and Völundr sit together⁷⁸ on the islet?’
41. ‘It’s true, Níðuðr, what he told you.
Völundr and I sat together on the islet,
for one sad hour⁷⁹ — it should never have been!⁸⁰
I didn’t know how to resist him at all,
I had no power to resist him at all!’

Textual Apparatus to *Vǫlundarkviða*

Vǫlundarkviða] This title, now traditional, is not in R but supplied from later, paper manuscripts

Frá Vǫlundi] An illegible rubricated heading in the facsimile volume of R; the reading is therefore taken from its transcription, which is bracketed; A *Frá níðaði konungi* 'About King Níðaðr'

Níðuðr] The first letter is large and rubricated, but faded, in R; A *Níðaðr*

hon hét] A *ok hæt hon* 'and she was called'

váru] so A; R absent

Slagfiðr] A *slagfinnr*

gerðu] A ends here

Hlǫðvés] R *lauðvés*

Svanhvítar] R *svanhvitar*

Vǫlundr] R *Vaulvnd*

Svanhvítar] R *svanhvitar*

Frá Vǫlundi ok Níðaði] An illegible rubricated heading in the facsimile volume of R; the reading is therefore taken from the transcription therein

1/1 *Meyjar*] The first letter is large, inset and rubricated, but faded

1/3 *ungar*] R *vnga* 'young (Alvitr)'

2/10 *Vǫlundar*] R *onondar*

3/9 *ungar*] R *vnga* 'young (Alvitr)'

4/2 *veðreygr*] R *vegreygr*

4/7 *skreið*] R *skreiðr*

5/4 *gim fastan*] R *gimfástaN*

5/8 *ljóssar*] R *líosár*

6/5 *fóru*] R *voro*

6/5 *seggir*] R *seger*

9/3 *ár*] R *hár*

9/4 *allþurr*] R *allþvr*

9/5 *vindþurri*] R *vín þvri*

16/4 *stillti*] R *stilti*

16 pr. *gullhring*] R *gollring*

17/5 *ámun*] R *amon*

17/9 *setið*] R *settib*

- 18/4 *hagast*] **R** *hagazt*
 20/3 *gørði*] **R** *gorði gorði*
 23/1 *kallaði*] **R** *kallað*
 23/2 á *annan*] **R** *aNan*
 24/4 *lagði*] **R** *log | þi*
 28/8 *íviðgjarnra*] **R** *ívíþ giarira*
 31/2 *vilja lauss*] **R** *vilia er laus.*
 32/4 *húnum*] **R** *sonom* ‘sons’
 33/13 *eða*] **R** *eð*
 39/1 *Bakkraðr*] **R** *þacraðr*
 41/8 *vinna*] **R** absent

Notes to the Translation

- 1 The *Finnar* ‘Sámi’ are often associated with magic and sorcery in Old Norse literature.
- 2 ‘Wolf Dales’.
- 3 ‘Wolf Sea’.
- 4 Many versions of the swan-maidens story have them bathing in a lake.
- 5 When wearing these skins (clothes), the women take on the nature of swans. Cf. *Vkv.* 2 and perhaps Völundr’s means of escape in *Vkv.* 29; also *Hlr.* 6 and the goddess Freyja’s feather-coat in *Prk.*
- 6 Valkyries are not normally swan-maidens, but horse-riding warriors who decide who falls in battle, at Óðinn’s command. The swan-maidens’ spinning may tie in with the valkyries’ role in determining the fate of warriors. Cf. the valkyries who weave the ‘web of war’ in the Eddic poem *Darraðarljóð* ‘Song of the Battle-Pennant(?)’ in the thirteenth-century *Brennu-Njáls saga*.
- 7 ‘Famous Warrior’; the name corresponds to Frankish *Chlodowech* (now Ludwig), and this personage might be a reflex of the historical Louis I (778–840), king of the Franks and Holy Roman Emperor. The name recurs in *Gðr.* II 25.
- 8 ‘Lace-Battle Swan-White’.
- 9 It is uncertain whether, in *Alvitr* (or *alvitr*), the vowel in *-vitr* is short or long, but this edition uses a short vowel in all instances. The word means either ‘Alien Being’ or ‘All Wise’.
- 10 These names for the three swan-maidens are a rationalization of the poem’s four names: Qlórún (Egill’s wife in *Vkv.* 4), Svanhvít (Slagfiðr’s wife in *Vkv.* 4), Hlaðguðr and Hervör (*Vkv.* 15), one of these last two being Völundr’s wife (*Vkv.* 10). To reduce this number to three, the author of the prose prologue has combined Hlaðguðr with Svanhvít. He has also combined Hervör with *alvitr* on the basis of *Vkv.* 10.
- 11 Caesar, *Valland* being the Old Norse word for Gaul.
- 12 I.e., the brothers.

- 13 In most versions of the story a man forces one of the maidens to stay with him by depriving her of her feather-coat and therewith her ability to fly. But in *Vkv.* 2 the unions seem voluntarily instigated by the swan-maidens: they embrace their husbands and at least one still has her swan plumage.
- 14 In the poem (st. 3) they stay for eight years and leave in the ninth.
- 15 I.e., the women.
- 16 'Murk Wood'. See *Ls.* 42.
- 17 Cf. *HH. II* 20 [26], where another instance of *alvitr* 'alien being', 'strange creature' denotes a valkyrie.
- 18 Literally 'sea's shore'.
- 19 This action is suggestive of the weaving of the threads of fate.
- 20 Literally 'of living beings'.
- 21 Or perhaps 'wore swan's plumage'.
- 22 In the prose they stay for only seven years.
- 23 The *Myrkviðr* of *Vkv.* 1.
- 24 The opening prose seems to interpret *ørlog drýja* 'to fulfil their fates' as 'to seek battles', whence perhaps its identification of the swan-maidens as valkyries.
- 25 I.e., a huntsman (here Völundr) who keeps a keen eye on the weather; the emendation of R's *vegreygr* 'way/road-eyed' is probably justified by *vedreygr*, the *lectio difficilior*, in *Vkv.* 8.
- 26 I.e., the hunt.
- 27 Gold is often described as 'red' in early Germanic texts. The explanation is probably not that gold was alloyed with copper to make what we now call 'red gold', but that the semantic range of ON *rauðr* included 'gold'. References to 'red rings' in the Eddic poems presumably also denote golden objects.
- 28 The text and meaning of the second half of this line are uncertain. This translation interprets *gim* as the acc. sg. of **gimr* 'gem' (cf. *gimsteinn* 'gemstone' and OE *gim*) and R's *fástaN* (disregarding the accent on the first vowel) as the acc. sg. masc. of *fastr* 'fast', 'firm'. Two alternatives: *hann sló gull rautt | við gim fástan* 'he beat red gold about a most bright gem', taking *fástan* as the superlative of *fár* 'multi-coloured', 'bright'; and *hann sló gull rautt | við gimfastan* 'he beat red gold on a fire-proof [anvil]', taking *gim* as an otherwise attested poetic term for 'fire', *-fastan* as 'firm', and assuming the implied presence of *steði*, acc. sg. of *steðja* 'anvil'.
- 29 The otherwise unattested compound *lindbauga* might mean 'rings for the linden(-bast) cord', but the interpretation 'snake-(arm)-rings' is arguably more attractive, as many early Germanic arm- and finger-rings are shaped like snakes or decorated with them. Cf. ON *armlinnr* 'arm-snake', i.e. 'armlet', OHG *lint* 'snake', Modern Icelandic *lindormur* 'serpent-snake', Swedish and Norwegian *lindorm*.
- 30 Apparently a Swedish people.
- 31 I.e., a waning moon, diminished as if cut by an edged weapon.
- 32 Völundr.
- 33 We learn from the prose following *Vkv.* 16 that Níðuðr takes this one ring.
- 34 Or perhaps merely 'compatriot of elves', i.e., 'elf'. Völundr is called *vísi álfá* 'wise one of the elves' in *Vkv.* 13 and 32. In the prose introduction, though, he is the son of a Sámi king.

In *Piðreks saga* the smith's ancestors include a human king, a mermaid and a giant, but no elves. He is, however, apprenticed to two dwarf-smiths, and *SnEskáld* (I, 35, p. 41) seems to equate such creatures with *svartálfar* 'dark-elves'.

- 35 Literally, 'free from his will/joy'. Cf. *Vkv.* 31.
- 36 This use of *nauðir* 'constraints', 'bonds' finds parallel in the Old English poem *Deor's* cognate noun *nede* (l. 5).
- 37 Or 'legs'.
- 38 The use of á *lögðu* 'put on' here is paralleled in *Deor's* on *legde*.
- 39 *Vísi*, literally 'wise one', can mean simply 'leader', but smiths are solitary folk. Cf. King Alfred's Old English *Metres of Boethius* 10 (l. 33): *Hwær sint nu þæs wisan / Welandes ban* 'Where now are the bones of the wise Weland?'
- 40 Níðuðr uses the royal 'we'.
- 41 Possibly Gnitheiðr (see *Fm.*'s initial prose).
- 42 *Grani* 'Moustached One' is the horse of Sigurðr, the great hero who appears in several subsequent poems. He won the dragon Fáfnir's treasure and took it away on *Grani* (see *Fm.*). It was later sunk in the Rhine (*Rín*).
- 43 Or perhaps 'wise' or 'skilled in magic'.
- 44 Apparently Níðuðr's (unnamed) wife.
- 45 In *Piðreks saga* the king desires Velent's marvellous sword, Mimungr, but unwittingly gets a look-alike weapon instead.
- 46 Literally, 'in the sea's place', i.e., a landing place by the sea. The following prose interprets this term as a place name, *Sævarstaðr* 'Sea's Stead'.
- 47 It appears that *sk-* alliterates with *sv-* in the Old Norse line.
- 48 In *Piðreks saga* Velent creates the sword Mimungr from the droppings of a starved fowl which he had fed meal mixed with sword-filings.
- 49 Literally 'open'.
- 50 Or 'Come alone, you two, come another day!'
- 51 Or perhaps 'the ring'.
- 52 The boys are likened to bear cubs, as also in stt. 32 and 34; cf. *Akv.* 12.
- 53 What the term *fen fjöturs* 'fen of the fetter' refers to is uncertain, but perhaps the 'fetter' is a bellows' metal mouth or frame, or part of an anvil, here used *pars pro toto* and in retributive reference to the literal *fjötur* 'fetter' laid on Vǫlundr's legs in *Vkv.* 11; the 'fen' might be a muddy pool beneath the 'fetter'. In *Piðreks saga* Velent buries the boys' bodies in a deep grave beneath the bellows; a similar fate is apparent from the front of the Franks Casket and the Ardre VIII picture stone.
- 54 Cf. *Am.* 82.
- 55 I.e., he made gems from their eyes.
- 56 Round brooches or round pendants.
- 57 A half-line may have dropped out of this stanza. Nevertheless, the general sense seems clear: Bǫðvildr has broken the gold ring which her father stole from Vǫlundr.
- 58 The last line is partly corrupt and its interpretation uncertain.

- 59 The interpretation of this line is disputed, but with the word *fitjum* (nom. sg. *fit*) Völundr seems to describe his feet in terms of the hind flippers of a seal or, more likely, the webbed feet of a water-bird. Middle Low German *vittek* ‘wing’ might also be relevant.
- 60 By hamstringing Völundr, they had deprived him of the ability to walk.
- 61 How Völundr takes to the air is uncertain. Possibly he made a magical feather-coat akin to those of the swan-maidens, or some sort of flying machine.
- 62 It is unclear whether this refers to Níðuðr or Völundr.
- 63 Or perhaps ‘had seated himself on the hall-fence’.
- 64 The queen asks this question.
- 65 And/or ‘robbed of joy’. Cf. *Vkv.* 11.
- 66 Cf. *Am.* 79 [81].
- 67 Women’s counsels are proverbially ‘cold’ in Old Norse literature; cf. *Ls.* 51.
- 68 Here Bøðvildr, who is also the ‘bride’ of the next line.
- 69 Völundr uses the royal ‘we’.
- 70 *Belgi* ‘skin bags’ might be deliberately ambiguous, referring to both the bellows and the murdered boys’ torsos.
- 71 If *senda* ‘sent’ is an error for *selda*, the originally intended sense would be ‘gave’; cf. *seldi* ‘gave’ in *Vkv.* 24.
- 72 ON *aukin* ‘big’, literally ‘increased’, finds parallel in *Deor*’s cognate *eacen*.
- 73 We know from other records that Bøðvildr will bear a son, Viðga. His martial exploits are told at length in *Bidreks saga*. He is perhaps a reflex of the Gothic hero Vidigoia mentioned in the sixth-century *Gothic History* of Jordanes.
- 74 Alternatively, emendation of *nítá* ‘to deny’ to *njóta* ‘to enjoy’ yields ‘nor could I wish you, Völundr, to enjoy worse’.
- 75 Or perhaps ‘there is no one tall enough to take you from your horse’. In *Bidreks saga* Velent has a horse as fast as a flying bird, but he is never said to fly on it.
- 76 By contrast, in *Bidreks saga* Egill shoots at Velent at Niðungr’s command. The arrow appears to hit him, but, as Egill intended, instead pierces a blood-filled bladder under the smith’s left arm.
- 77 Níðuðr speaks these words.
- 78 A euphemism for sexual intercourse.
- 79 *Ogurstund* can refer specifically to the ‘period (*stund*) when the tide is highest’, at which point the islet was perhaps cut off from the mainland. At the same time, the word probably denotes a ‘period of great distress’, as there was also a noun *ggur* meaning ‘heavy heart’. Given Bøðvildr’s anguish at being raped by Völundr, the earlier statement in *Vkv.* 29 that she ‘grieved at her lover’s going’ may appear grimly ironic.
- 80 Cf. *Deor*’s description of Beadohild’s distress about her pregnancy: *æfre ne meahte / priste gehencan hu ymb þæt sceolde* ‘she could never consider without fear how it had to turn out.’ There are lexical correspondences between OE *æfre* ... *meahte* ... *sceolde* and ON *æva skyldi* ... *máttak*.

Alvíssmál

Alvíssmál (*Alv.*) ‘The Sayings of Alvíss’ is found complete in R (fol. 19v–20r) and derivative paper manuscripts. Variant versions of stt. 20 and 30 appear in *SnESkáld*, manuscripts of which variously call the poem *Alvíssmál*, *Qlvíssmál* and *Alsvinnsmál* (*Alsvinnr* ‘All Wise’ or *Alsviðr* ‘All Swift’). This suggests that it may have existed in some form before c. 1220–41.

The poem’s metre is almost entirely *ljóðaháttir*, the usual choice for dialogue poems. The sole exception is the second half of the final stanza, which is in *galdralag*.

Alv. is the last poem—or, arguably, poetic drama—in R’s mythological group. It may owe its position beside *Vkv.* to their shared focus on two lesser kinds of supernatural being: respectively, the elf, represented by *Volundr*, and the dwarf, represented by Alvíss. *Alv.*’s placement after *Vkv.* perhaps reflects a compiler’s perception of narrative and stylistic similarities between *Brk.* and *Vkv.*, but it separates *Alv.* from the other poems that either focus on Þórr or give him a prominent role (*Hrbl.*, *Hym.*, *Ls.* and *Brk.*) and from the comparable wisdom poems at the start of R (*Vsp.*, *Háv.*, *Vm.* and *Grm.*).

Alv. is comparable to *Vsp.*, *BDr.* and *Hdl.* in recounting a god’s questioning of an otherworldly being. The poem’s closest Eddic correspondences, however, are with the late bridal-quest poem *Fj.* (part of *Svipdagsmál*), the wisdom contest *Vm.* (to which *Alv.* might be indebted), and the wisdom monologue *Grm.* *Vm.*, *Grm.* and *Alv.* set their wisdom passages in a simple framing narrative that culminates in the death of the god’s giant or giant-like adversary: respectively, the giant Vafþrúðnir, King Geirrðr (namesake of a famous giant) and the giantish dwarf Alvíss. In *Vm.* and *Grm.* the god is Óðinn, not Þórr, but although *Alv.*’s Þórr does not display Óðinn’s learning, he resembles Óðinn in his use of trickery, rather than brute force, to defeat his opponent. Perhaps it is surprise at the unusualness of being questioned by Þórr—and so of having the opportunity to outsmart him—that fatally distracts Alvíss.

Indeed, why Þórr does not simply slay Alvíss with his hammer is puzzling, because he shows no such restraint elsewhere. Contrast, for example, his swift slaying—in violation of sworn oaths—of the giant employed to rebuild the gods’ defensive wall after the Æsir-Vanir war (*Vsp.* H 22); also his kicking of the dwarf Litr onto Baldr’s funeral pyre in *SnEGylf* (49, p. 46). Perhaps the difference this time is that Þórr does not wish to leave evidence of his opposition (according to one possible interpretation) to Óðinn’s promise to marry his foster-daughter(?) to Alvíss. Consequently, Alvíss has

to die by non-violent means, preferably—to validate Pórr's disapproval—through his own foolishness. And foolish is how Alvíss appears at the last; despite being a veritable thesaurus, the 'all-wise' dwarf lacks wisdom. He might know every name and *þll ... rök fira* 'all the history of living beings', but his own 'destiny/doom' (another sense of *rök*) takes him by surprise. In this respect we may compare Vafþrúðnir, although it is doubtful whether, given the chance, Alvíss would have matched that giant's dignified resignation in defeat.

Alvíss's role in the poem reinforces his giantish associations. In *Vsp.*, *Prk.* and elsewhere, giants desire goddesses—generally Freyja, but also sometimes Pórr's wife Sif and Íðunn (for her apples). They devise various means to obtain them—some legitimate and contractual, some not—but are thwarted, usually by Pórr's swinging hammer. In *Alv.* the object of desire could well be Pórr's foster-daughter (or at least a young female in his care), though she herself is not necessarily divine. This story is otherwise unknown, but a similar one seems to have existed, again involving a giant. According to a kenning in an early skaldic verse attributed to Bragi Boddason and preserved in *SnESkáld* (I, 49, p. 69), the giant Hrungnir is the *Þrúðar þjófr* 'thief of Þrúðr', Þrúðr being Pórr's only known daughter.

Although thwarted attempts to marry or abduct goddesses seem to have been a staple topic of Norse myth, *Alv.* (if correctly associated with them) is the only instance to concern a dwarf. In early Norse sources, dwarves tend to keep to themselves. Unlike the giants, but like the elves, there is no mention of male and female dwarves, let alone of dwarf marriages. Furthermore, dwarves do not otherwise seek the gods. Rather the gods seek them to benefit from their skill as smiths; among their creations are Óðinn's spear, Pórr's hammer, Freyr's ship and Sif's golden hair. Similarly, in late legendary-heroic sagas, heroes seek dwarves and force them to forge splendid weapons. Only the first chapter of the fourteenth-century *Sorla þáttr* 'Tale of Sorli' tells of sex between dwarves and a goddess; Freyja liked the look of a necklace they were making, they liked the look of her, and she duly provided sex as payment.

If Alvíss's relations with the gods are unusual for a dwarf, other aspects of his nature are easier to parallel. Dwarf-names such as *Dáinn* 'Dead One' and *Náinn* 'Corpse-Like One' support Pórr's suspicions about Alvíss's association with the dead (*Alv.* 2). That dwarves know things is confirmed by dwarf-names such as *Fjolsviðr* 'Very Wise One' and *Vitr* 'Wise One', the dwarf Þjóðreyrir's chanting in *Hav.* 160, and dwarves' description as *vísir* 'wise ones' in *Vsp.* 50. Alvíss's home under a stone finds correspondence in, for example, chapter 12 of *Ynglinga saga* and in *Vsp.* 50. And although it is merely a likelihood that Alvíss turns to stone at dawn (a fate that elsewhere befalls rock-dwelling giants and trolls), the sun's description as 'Dvalinn's toy' in *Alv.* 16 (see note 43), the reference to a *dagskjarr* 'day-shy' dwarf in st. 2 of the poem *Ynglingatal* 'Tally of the Ynglings' in *Ynglinga saga*, and the dwarf-name *Sólblindi* 'Sun-Blind/Hidden One' suggest that he was not the only one of his kind to be harmed or destroyed by daylight.

Having said that *Alv.*'s wisdom dialogue is comparable to that of *Vm.* (it also bears comparison with the questioning of suitors in folk-tales), Alvíss's wisdom is primarily linguistic, rather than mythological. For *Alv.* may appear to be, as Calvert Watkins has noted, essentially a 'quite artificial literary showpiece and tour de force,' and effectively a 'versified "synonymy"'.¹ Some have thought its purpose merely virtuosic, but it might also have been intended, to some extent, as an aide-mémoire for poets—or, given that most of its poetic synonyms (*heiti*) are rare in poetry, at least as a reference for them. If so, *Alv.* shares a purpose with Snorri's *Prose Edda*, for which it is, as noted above, a direct source. *Alv.* is undoubtedly, like Eddic poems such as *Vsp.* (*Dvergatal* section) and *Grm.*, akin to versified *pulur* 'name-lists' extant from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, whether as a source or a derivative.

In another regard, *Alv.*'s assignment of different words to different kinds of being is of interest because it manifests an ancient Indo-European notion also reflected in, for example, Homer's *Iliad*, the Sanskrit *Satapatha-Brahmana* and a medieval Irish treatise on grammar and poetics called *Auraicept na n-Éces* 'The Scholar's Primer'. At root, the notion is thought to be of a binary opposition between the language of humans (ordinary, semantically 'unmarked' words) and that of gods (less common, semantically 'marked' words). Accordingly, words assigned to humans in *Alv.* are still in everyday use in Norwegian, whereas those assigned to the divine powers tend to be, as Lennart Moberg has observed, 'higher up the stylistic scale ... poetic circumlocutions of various types'; unfortunately, these nuances are lost in translation to English.

The *Alv.* poet refines this opposition by assigning—perhaps sometimes inventing—words and expressions according to the nature of each being and as far as the alliterative constraints of his metre and strictly formulaic approach allow. In so doing, he indirectly imparts mythological meaning. Thus, the translations of the elves' words suggest a cheerful disposition and an appreciation of nature's beauty: 'growing', 'fair roof', 'fair wheel', 'day-soother', 'fair limb', and 'sleep-joy'. By contrast, the giants' words have a grimmer, more literal-minded and utilitarian bent: 'greenish', 'up-world', 'hurrier', 'sultry', 'eel-home', 'greedy', 'fuel', 'unlight', and 'food.' The gods' words appear more solemn, poetic or archaic.

The concept of a different world or home (*heimr*) for each kindred probably corresponds, broadly at least, to the nine worlds of *Vsp.* 2. From *Alv.* we might deduce (with place-names supplied from other sources), one world each for humans (*Miðgarðr*), Æsir (*Ásgarðr*), Vanir (*Vanaheimr*), elves (*Álfheimr*), giants (*Jötunheim(a)r*), dwarves (the earth) and the dead (*Hel*). Systematizers might want to add two more to make nine—arguably a world each for the mysterious *uppregin* 'powers above' of *Alv.* 10 and the *halir* 'heroes' of *Alv.* 28, but such an approach is often inappropriate for beliefs that were doubtless subject to change.

¹ C. Watkins, 'Language of Gods and Language of Men: Remarks on Some Indo-European Metalinguistic Traditions', in J. Puhvel, ed., *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans: Studies in Indo-European Comparative Mythology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 1–17 at 5, 17.

Synopsis

Alv. begins with an as yet unidentified person declaring that he will bring home a wife, despite what everyone may think (1). Someone else, noting the stranger's deathly, ogrish appearance and thinking him ill-suited to marriage, demands to know who he is (2). The stranger introduces himself as Alvíss 'All Wise'; he lives beneath a stone and has come to see the 'man of carts(?)' (probably Óðinn), who has made him a firm pledge (3). The questioner declares the arrangement invalid because he was away when it was made—only he among the gods can give the woman in marriage (4). Alvíss asks who he is and declares him a vagabond (5). Þórr identifies himself and repeats his opposition to the marriage (6). Alvíss nevertheless declares his eagerness for the match (7). Þórr says Alvíss can have her if he can tell him everything he wants to know 'from every world' (8).

Þórr asks Alvíss, now identified as a dwarf, thirteen, mostly paired questions about how various things are called in each world: earth (9), sky (11); moon (13), sun (15); clouds (17), wind (19); calm (21), sea (23); fire (25), wood (27); night (29) (but not day!); seed (31) and ale (33). Alvíss answers each question in turn, telling Þórr the words for these things among principally humans, Æsir, Vanir, giants, elves and dwarves. Þórr acknowledges the dwarf's great learning, but reveals that he has tricked him into staying above ground too long; dawn has broken, the sun is shining and, it seems likely, has turned Alvíss to stone or otherwise destroyed him (35).

Further Reading

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Alvíssmál

1. 'Bekki breiða nú skal brúðr með mér,
heim í sinni snúask;
hratat um mægi mun hverjum þíkkja,
heima skalat hvíld nema!'
2. 'Hvat er þat fira? Hví ertu svá fólr um nasar?
Vartu í nótt með ná?
Þursa líki þíkki mér á þér vera,
ertattu til brúðar borinn!'
3. 'Alvíss ek heiti, bý ek fyr jorð neðan,
á ek undir steini stað;
vagna vers ek em á vit kominn,
bregði engi fóstu heiti fira!'
4. 'Ek mun bregða, þvíat ek brúðar á
flest um ráð sem faðir;
varka ek heima, þá er þér heitit var,
at sá einn er gjafi er með goðum.'
5. 'Hvat er þat rekka, er í ráðum telsk
fljóðs ins fagrlíoa?
Fjarrafleina þík munu fáir kunna —
hverr hefir þík baugum borit?'
6. 'Vingþórr ek heiti — ek hefi víða ratat —
sonr em ek Síðgrana;
at ósátt minni skaltu þat it unga man hafa
ok þat gjaforð geta.'
7. 'Sáttir þínar er ek vil snemma hafa,
ok þat gjaforð geta;
eiga vilja, heldr en án vera,
þat it mjallhvíta man.'
8. 'Meyjar ástum muna þér verða,
vísi gestr, of varit,
ef þú ór heimi kant hverjum at segja
allt þat er ek vil vita.'
9. 'Segðu mér þat, Alvíss — qll of rök fira
vørumk, dvergr, at vitir:
hvé sú jorð heitir, er liggr fyr alda sonum,
heimi hverjum í.'

The Sayings of Alvíss

1. 'Now shall a bride cover¹ the benches with me,²
 come home in my company;
it'll seem to everyone a hurried engagement,³
 she shan't take her leisure at home!'⁴
2. 'What kind of living thing is that? Why are you so livid around the nose?
 Were you with a corpse last night?⁵
There seems to me to be the likeness of giants in you,⁶
 you weren't born for a bride!'
3. 'I am named Alvíss,⁷ I live beneath the earth,
 I have a homestead under stone,⁸
I've come to see the man of carts(?),⁹
 let no one break people's firm pledge!'
4. 'I shall break it, because I have most say
 over the bride, like her father;¹⁰
I wasn't at home when she was betrothed to you,
 [I being] the only one who is her giver(?) among the gods.'¹¹
5. 'What kind of man are you who claims authority
 over the fair-glowing woman?
Few will recognize you, vagrant¹² —
 who has born you to arm-rings?'¹³
6. 'I am named Vingþórr¹⁴ — I have wandered widely¹⁵ —
 I am Síðgrani's¹⁶ son;
not with my consent shall you have the young maiden
 and get that marriage.'¹⁷
7. 'Your consent is what I soon want to have,
 and to make this marriage;
I would rather have, than be without,
 that snow-white¹⁸ maiden.'
8. 'The maiden's love won't be withheld
 from you, wise guest,¹⁹
if you can tell me all that I want to know
 from every world.'²⁰
9. 'Tell me this, Alvíss — I expect, dwarf, that you know
 all the history of living beings:
what the earth,²¹ which lies before the sons of men,
 is named in each world.'

10. 'Jörð heitir með mǫnnum, en með Ásum fold,
 kalla vega Vanir,
 ígrœn jötnar, álfar gróandi,
 kalla aur uppregin.'
11. 'Segðu mér þat, Alvíss — qll of rök fira
 vørumk, dvergr, at vitir:
 hvé sá himinn heitir, inn *Hymi* kendi,
 heimi hverjum í.'
12. 'Himinn heitir með mǫnnum, en hlýrnir með goðum,
 kalla vindofni Vanir,
 upphheim jötnar, álfar fragrarræfr,
 dvergar dríúpan sal.'
13. 'Segðu mér þat, Alvíss — qll of rök fira
 vørumk, dvergr, at vitir:
 hversu máni heitir, sá er menn sjá,
 heimi hverjum í.'
14. 'Máni heitir með mǫnnum, en mylinn með goðum,
 kalla hverfanda hvél Helju í,
 skyndi jötnar, en skin dvergar,
 kalla álfar ártala.'
15. 'Segðu mér þat, Alvíss — qll of rök fira
 vørumk, dvergr, at vitir:
 hvé sú sól heitir, er sjá alda synir,
 heimi hverjum í.'
16. 'Sól heitir með mǫnnum, en sunna með goðum,
 kalla dvergar Dvalins leika,
 eygló jötnar, álfar fragrahvél,
 alskí Ása synir.'
17. 'Segðu mér þat, Alvíss — qll of rök fira
 vørumk, dvergr, at vitir:
 hvé þau ský heita, er skúrum blandask,
 heimi hverjum í.'
18. 'Ský heita með mǫnnum, en skúrván með goðum,
 kalla vindflot Vanir,
 úrván jötnar, álfar veðrmegin,
 kalla í Helju hjálm huliðs.'

10. 'It's named *jorð*²² among men, but *fold*²³ among Æsir,
Vanir call it *vegar*,²⁴
giants *ígræn*,²⁵ elves *gróandi*,²⁶
the powers above²⁷ call it *aurr*.²⁸
11. 'Tell me this, Alvíss — I expect, dwarf, that you know
all the history of living beings:
what the sky, the one known to Hymir(?),²⁹
is named in each world.'
12. 'It's named *himinn*³⁰ among men, but *hlýrnir*³¹ among gods,
Vanir call it *vindofnir*,³²
giants *upphéimr*,³³ elves *fagrarræfr*,³⁴
dwarves *drjúpr salr*.³⁵
13. 'Tell me this, Alvíss — I expect, dwarf, that you know
all the history of living beings:
how the moon, which men see,
is named in each world.'
14. 'It's named *máni*³⁶ among men, but *mýlinn*³⁷ among gods,
in Hel they call it *hverfanda hvél*,³⁸
giants *skyndir*,³⁹ and dwarves *skin*,⁴⁰
elves call it *ártali*.⁴¹
15. 'Tell me this, Alvíss — I expect, dwarf, that you know
all the history of living beings:
what the sun, which the sons of men see,
is named in each world.'
16. 'It's named *sól* among men, but *sumna*⁴² among gods,
dwarves call it *Dvalins leiki*,⁴³
giants *eygló*,⁴⁴ elves *fagrahvél*,⁴⁵
sons of the Æsir⁴⁶ *alskír*.⁴⁷
17. 'Tell me this, Alvíss — I expect, dwarf, that you know
all the history of living beings:
what the clouds, which mix with showers,
are named in each world.'
18. 'They're named *ský*⁴⁸ among men, but *skúrván*⁴⁹ among gods,
Vanir call them *vindflot*,⁵⁰
giants *úrván*,⁵¹ elves *veðrmegin*,⁵²
in Hel they call them *hjálmr huliðs*.⁵³

19. 'Segðu mér þat, Alvíss — qll of rök fira
 vþrumk, dvergr, at vitir:
 hvé sá vindr heitir, er víðast ferr,
 heimi hverjum í.'
20. 'Vindr heitir með mönnum, en váfuðr með goðum,
 kalla gneggjuð ginnregin,
 œpi jötnar, álfar dynfara,
 kalla í Helju hviðuð.'
21. 'Segðu mér þat, Alviss — qll of rök fira
 vþrumk, dvergr, at vitir:
 hvé þat logn heitir, er liggja skal,
 heimi hverjum í.'
22. 'Logn heitir með mönnum, en lægi með goðum,
 kalla vindslot Vanir,
 ofhlý jötnar, álfar dagsefa,
 kalla dvergar dags veru.'
23. 'Segðu mér þat, Alvíss — qll of rök fira
 vþrumk, dvergr, at vitir:
 hvé sá marr heitir, er menn róa,
 heimi hverjum í.'
24. 'Sær heitir með mönnum, en sílægja með goðum,
 kalla vág Vanir,
 álheim jötnar, álfar lagastaf,
 kalla dvergar djúpan mar.'
25. 'Segðu mér þat, Alvíss — qll of rök fira
 vþrumk, dvergr, at vitir:
 hvé sá eldr heitir, er brenn fyr alda sonum,
 heimi hverjum í.'
26. 'Eldr heitir með mönnum, en með Ásum funi,
 kalla vág Vanir,
 frekan jötnar, en forbrenni dvergar,
 kalla í Helju hröðuð.'
27. 'Segðu mér þat, Alvíss — qll of rök fira
 vþrumk, dvergr, at vitir:
 hvé sá viðr heitir, er vex fyr alda sonum,
 heimi hverjum í.'

19. 'Tell me this, Alvíss — I expect, dwarf, that you know
all the history of living beings:
what the wind, which travels most widely,
is named in each world.'
20. 'It's named *vindr*⁵⁴ among men, but *váfuðr*⁵⁵ among gods,
mighty powers⁵⁶ call it *gneggjuðr*,⁵⁷
giants *œpir*,⁵⁸ elves *dynfari*,⁵⁹
in Hel they call it *hviðuðr*.⁶⁰
21. 'Tell me this, Alvíss — I expect, dwarf, that you know
all the history of living beings:
what the calm, which shall lie,⁶¹
is named in each world.'
22. 'It's named *logn*⁶² among men, but *lægi*⁶³ among gods,
Vanir call it *vindslot*,⁶⁴
giants *ofhlý*,⁶⁵ elves *dagsefti*,⁶⁶
dwarves call it *dags vera*.⁶⁷
23. 'Tell me this, Alvíss — I expect, dwarf, that you know
all the history of living beings:
what the sea, which men row on,
is named in each world.'
24. 'It's named *sær*⁶⁸ among men, but *sílægja*⁶⁹ among gods,
Vanir call it *vágri*,⁷⁰
giants *álheimr*,⁷¹ elves *lagastafr*,⁷²
dwarves call it *djúpr marr*.⁷³
25. 'Tell me this, Alvíss — I expect, dwarf, that you know
all the history of living beings:
what the fire, which burns before the sons of men,
is named in each world.'
26. 'It's named *eldr*⁷⁴ among men, but *funi*⁷⁵ among Æsir,
Vanir call it *vágri*,⁷⁶
giants *freki*,⁷⁷ and dwarves *forbrennir*,⁷⁸
in Hel they call it *hrøðuðr*.⁷⁹
27. 'Tell me this, Alvíss — I expect, dwarf, that you know
all the history of living beings:
what the wood, which grows before the sons of men,
is named in each world.'

28. 'Viðr heitir með mǫnnum, en vallar fax með goðum,
 kalla hlíðþang halir,
 eldi jötnar, álfar fagrlima,
 kalla vǫnd Vanir.'
29. 'Segðu mér þat, Alvíss — qll of rök fira
 vǫrumk, dvergr, at vitir:
 hvé sú nött heitir, in Nørvi kenda,
 heimi hverjum í.'
30. 'Nótt heitir með mǫnnum, en njól með goðum,
 kalla grímu ginnregin,
 óljós jötnar, álfar svefngaman,
 kalla dvergar draumnjorun.'
31. 'Segðu mér þat, Alvíss — qll of rök fira
 vǫrumk, dvergr, at vitir:
 hvé þat sáð heitir, er sá alda synir,
 heimi hverjum í.'
32. 'Bygg heitir með mǫnnum, en barr með goðum,
 kalla vaxt Vanir,
 æti jötnar, álfar lagastaf,
 kalla í Helju hnippinn.'
33. 'Segðu mér þat, Alvíss — qll of rök fira
 vǫrumk, dvergr, at vitir:
 hvé þat ql heitir, er drekka alda synir,
 heimi hverjum í.'
34. 'Ql heitir með mǫnnum, en með Ásum bjórr,
 kalla veig Vanir,
 hreinalög jötnar, en í Helju mjöð,
 kalla sumbl Suttungs synir.'
35. 'Í einu brjósti ek sák aldregi
 fleiri forna stafi!
 Miklum tálum ek kveð tældan þík:
 uppi ertu, dvergr, um dagaðr,
 nú skínn sól í sali!'

28. 'It's named *viðr*⁸⁰ among men, but *vallar fax*⁸¹ by gods,
heroes⁸² call it *hlíðhang*,⁸³
giants *eldi*,⁸⁴ elves *fagrími*,⁸⁵
Vanir call it *vøndr*.'⁸⁶
29. 'Tell me this, Alvíss — I expect, dwarf, that you know
all the history of living beings:
what the night, the one known to Nørr,⁸⁷
is named in each world.'
30. 'It's named *nótt*⁸⁸ among men, but *njól*⁸⁹ among gods,
mighty powers⁹⁰ call it *gríma*,⁹¹
giants *óljós*,⁹² elves *svefnagaman*,⁹³
dwarves call it *draumnjorun*.'⁹⁴
31. 'Tell me this, Alvíss — I expect, dwarf, that you know
all the history of living beings:
what the seed, which the sons of men sow,
is named in each world.'
32. 'It's named *bygg*⁹⁵ among men, but *barr*⁹⁶ among gods,
Vanir call it *vaxt*,⁹⁷
giants *æti*,⁹⁸ elves *lagastafr*,⁹⁹
in Hel they call it *hnipinn*.'¹⁰⁰
33. 'Tell me this, Alvíss — I expect, dwarf, that you know
all the history of living beings:
what the ale,¹⁰¹ which the sons of men drink,
is named in each world.'
34. 'It's named *þl*¹⁰² among men, but *bjórr*¹⁰³ by Æsir,
Vanir call it *veig*,¹⁰⁴
giants *hreinalogr*,¹⁰⁵ and in Hel *mjoðr*,¹⁰⁶
Suttungr's sons¹⁰⁷ call it *sumbl*.'¹⁰⁸
35. 'In a single breast I've never seen
more ancient staves!¹⁰⁹
By great tricks I declare you've been duped:
you're up, dwarf, when it's dawned,¹¹⁰
the sun now shines in the halls!'¹¹¹

Textual Apparatus to *Alvíssmál*

Alvíssmál] Rubricated but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this reading is therefore reliant on the transcription therein

1/1 *Bekki*] The first letter is large, half-inset and green in R

4/6 *gjafi er*] R *giaufer*

10/2 *Ásum*] R *alfom* 'elves'

11/1–3] R abbreviates here and subsequently

11/5 *inn Hymi kendi*] R *erakendi*

11/6 *hverjum i*] R abbreviates *h. i.* here and subsequently

12/1 *heitir*] R abbreviates *h.* here and subsequently

16/3 *dvergar*] R abbreviates *dv.*

18/3 *kalla*] R abbreviates *k.* here and subsequently

18/5 *álfar*] R abbreviates *ál.*

18/6 *huliðs*] R *hvliz*

20/2 *váfuðr*] R *vauopr*

20/3 *gneggjuð*] R *gnegioþ*

20/4 *jotnar*] R abbreviates *iau.*

20/5 *álfar*] R abbreviates *ál.*

21/6 *heimi hverjum i*] R abbreviates *h. i.*

22/2 *lægi*] R *logi*

22/3 *vindslot*] R *vinzflot*

22/4 *jotnar*] R abbreviates *iq.*

22/5 *álfar*] R abbreviates *al.*

22/6 *dvergar*] R abbreviates *dver.*

23/6 *heimi hverjum i*] R abbreviates *.h.*

24/1 *með*] R abbreviates *m.*

24/6 *dvergar*] R abbreviates *dver.*

25/5–6 *sonum ... i*] R abbreviates *s. h. i.*

26/5 *dvergar*] R *dauergar*

27/4 *sá*] R absent

27/5–6] *alda ... i*] R abbreviates *al. s. h. i.*

28/2 *fax*] R *far*

28/3 *hlíðþang*] R *hlipang*

- 28/4 *jotnar*] R abbreviates *iot.*
- 28/5 *álfar*] R abbreviates *al.*
- 29/6 *heimi ... í*] R abbreviates *h. i.*
- 30/1 *heitir með*] R abbreviates *h. m.*
- 30/2 *goðum*] R abbreviates *g.*
- 30/3 *kalla*] R abbreviates *k.*
- 30/5 *álfar*] R abbreviates *al.*
- 30/6 *dvergar*] R abbreviates *dver.*
- 31/5–6 *synir ... í*] R abbreviates *s. h. i.*
- 32/2 *goðum*] R abbreviates *g.*
- 32/3 *kalla*] R abbreviates *k.*
- 32/4 *jotnar*] R abbreviates *iau.*
- 32/5 *álfar*] R abbreviates *al.*
- 32/6 *kalla*] R abbreviates *k.*
- 33/5–6 *synir ... í*] R abbreviates *s. h. i.*
- 34/3 *kalla*] R abbreviates *k.*
- 34/4 *jotnar*] R *iau.*
- 34/6 *kalla*] R abbreviates *k.*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 Or perhaps ‘prepare’.
- 2 Hosts covered their benches with cushions or straw in preparation for guests; cf. *þrk.* 22.
- 3 Literally, ‘relationship by marriage’.
- 4 This line is ambiguous. It could mean that Alvíss will not let his hastily acquired bride live quietly at *her* home among the gods, but will rather put her to work at *his* home. Or it could be a sexual boast that ‘at my home she shan’t get any rest!’ Another possibility is ‘at my home no one shall deprive us of rest’.
- 5 Dwarves live below ground, where the dead also reside.
- 6 Norse giants and dwarves have affinities: both live in rocks; *Vsp.* 9 says dwarves came from the blood of the giant Brimir and the limbs of the giant Bláinn; *SnEGylf* (14, p. 15) says dwarves originated as maggots in the flesh of the giant Ymir; *Þórsdrápa*, in *SnEskáld* (I, 18, p. 29), calls the giant Geirrøðr *átruðr Suðri* ‘relative of Suðri [a dwarf]’; wisdom is a characteristic of some giants; they share such names as Fjalarr and Fjölsviðr. Reginn, foster-father of Sigurðr, is described as *dvergr of vøxt* ‘a dwarf in stature’ in the prose prologue to *Rm.*, but as a *jotunn* ‘giant’ in *Fm.* 38.
- 7 ‘All Wise’.
- 8 The usual dwelling place of dwarves; cf. e.g., *Vsp.* 50.

- 9 Or 'I've come to see the sea of carts [i.e., the surface of the earth]', given that dwarves live below ground. Although Þórr drives a chariot (cf. *þrk.* 21), if 'man of carts' is the (or an) intended sense here, it may instead describe Óðinn, who is called *vagna rúni* 'friend of wagons' in st. 22 of Egill Skalla-Grímsson's skaldic poem *Sonatorrek* 'The Wreck of Sons'. It may be that Óðinn promised a woman—possibly Þórr's foster-daughter—to Alvíss during one of Þórr's frequent absences.
- 10 The girl might have been entrusted to Þórr's care. It is doubtful whether *sem faðir* might alternatively mean 'as (i.e., in my capacity as) her father', in which case the bride would be Þórr's biological daughter and at least partly divine.
- 11 I.e., Þórr is the only god who has the right to give her away. But the last line of this stanza is problematic and its precise meaning unclear.
- 12 Cf. Þórr's beggarly appearance as a traveller in *Hrbl.* 6.
- 13 A problematic line, but probably a riposte to Þórr's opinion that Alvíss's birth disqualifies him from marriage. Alvíss assumes that the 'vagrant' is not of noble birth, and that he therefore cannot have the authority he claims. This line could also be interpreted as *hvorr hefir þik baug um borit?* 'who has brought you an arm-ring?'—an accusation of penury that might imply that Þórr would have to rely on charity for his daughter's dowry.
- 14 Probably 'Swinging-Þórr'.
- 15 Þórr's journeys invariably involve slaying giants.
- 16 'Broad Moustache', an alias of Óðinn.
- 17 Literally, 'gift-word', i.e., verbal permission for the 'gift' of a female in marriage.
- 18 Or 'flour-white'.
- 19 A designation presumably deduced from the meaning of the dwarf's name: 'All Wise'. Cf. *Vm.* 19.
- 20 'World' (literally 'home') as in 'region inhabited by a specific type of being'. In many paper manuscripts this stanza is followed by another in which Alvíss invites Þórr to test his knowledge and claims to have travelled through all nine worlds.
- 21 Þórr, perhaps in keeping with his role as Miðgarðr's protector and god of farmers, generally uses the language of humans ('men') in *Alv.*
- 22 'Earth'.
- 23 'Field'.
- 24 'Ways'.
- 25 'Greenish' or perhaps 'inherently/very green'.
- 26 'Growing'.
- 27 The identity of the *uppregin*, literally 'up-powers', is unclear; cf. *vis regin* in *Vm.* 39 and *ginnregin* in *Alv.* 20.
- 28 'Clay' or 'mud', 'loam'.
- 29 The unemended text (*erakendi*) is corrupt here. The likely parallel of *Alv.* 29 in *Nprvi kenda* suggests that a proper noun alliterating on *h-* has been omitted. Hymir was a giant who, according to *Hym.* 5, lived at *himins enda* 'at the sky's end'; his presence here, being dependent on an emendation, is conjectural.
- 30 'Sky/heaven'.
- 31 Literally, '(one with) faced heavenly bodies (i.e., sun and moon)'.

- 32 'Wind-weaver'.
- 33 'Up-world'.
- 34 'Fair roof'.
- 35 'Dripping hall'. Cf. the list of names for the sky in *SnEskáld* (I, 56, p. 85).
- 36 'Moon'.
- 37 Possibly a term for the waning (crescent) moon.
- 38 'Whirling wheel'.
- 39 'Hurrier'. Cf. *Grm.* 39 and *SnEGylf* (12, p. 14 and p. 60 n.), according to which the moon is pursued by the wolf Hati Hróðvitnisson.
- 40 'Shine'.
- 41 'Year-counter'. Cf. *Vsp.* 6 and *Vm.* 25.
- 42 'Sun'.
- 43 'Dvalinn's toy/plaything' or 'Dvalinn's playmate'. Dwarves were probably believed to turn to stone, or at least to be destroyed in some way, if they were above ground during the day. It is likely that Dvalinn, a dwarf whose name is interpretable as 'Delayed (One)', played with at least a piece of stolen sun too long and paid the price at dawn.
- 44 'Ever-glow'.
- 45 'Fair wheel'.
- 46 The 'sons of the *Æsir*' are perhaps just *Æsir*.
- 47 'All-pure/bright'. Cf. the lists of names for the sun in *SnEskáld* (I, 56, p. 85; 75, p. 133).
- 48 'Clouds'.
- 49 'Prospect of shower'.
- 50 'Wind-floating'.
- 51 'Prospect of drizzle'.
- 52 'Weather/wind/storm power'.
- 53 'Helmet of hiding'.
- 54 'Wind'.
- 55 'Waverer' or perhaps 'roamer'. Elsewhere this term is an alias of Óðinn.
- 56 It is unclear who the 'mighty powers' are.
- 57 'Neigher'.
- 58 'Howler'.
- 59 'Din-farer'.
- 60 'Squaller'. *SnEskáld* (I, 59, p. 90) quotes a variant version of this stanza.
- 61 This line is metrically suspect; possibly *fyr alda sonum* 'before the sons of men' has dropped out.
- 62 'Calm'.
- 63 'Laying(?)'.
- 64 'Wind-end'.
- 65 'Sultry'.
- 66 'Day-soother'.

- 67 'Day's existence/shelter'.
- 68 'Sea'.
- 69 'Ever-calm' or perhaps 'ever-lying'.
- 70 'Surge'. Cf. *Alv.* 26.
- 71 'Eel-home' or perhaps 'home of the ocean-current'.
- 72 'Waters' stave/(source?)', a puzzling term.
- 73 'Deep sea'.
- 74 'Fire'.
- 75 'Flame'.
- 76 'Surge'. Cf. *Alv.* 24.
- 77 'Greedy'.
- 78 'Burner up'.
- 79 'Hurrier'.
- 80 'Wood'.
- 81 'Field's mane'. Cf. *Grm.* 40.
- 82 The distinction from 'men' is unclear.
- 83 'Slope-seaweed'.
- 84 'Firewood'.
- 85 'Fair-limb'.
- 86 'Wand'. Or, given the Vanir's association with the sea, 'mast', a frequent meaning of *vandr* in skaldic poetry.
- 87 Njorr is the father of night; cf. *Vm.* 25.
- 88 'Night'.
- 89 'Darkness'.
- 90 Cf. *Alv.* 20.
- 91 'Mask'.
- 92 'Unlight'.
- 93 'Sleep-joy'.
- 94 'Dream-Njørn'. Njørn is a goddess whose name appears in kennings for 'woman'. *SnESkáld* (I, 63, p. 99) quotes a variant version of this stanza.
- 95 'Barley'.
- 96 'Barley'.
- 97 'Growth'. Or *vaxtr*.
- 98 'Food'.
- 99 'Waters' stave/(source?)'. *Lagastafr* makes no sense here; it is presumably a mistaken scribal repetition from *Alv.* 24, where it is the elves' word for 'sea'. The elves' word for 'seed' is apparently lost.
- 100 'Hanging down'.
- 101 Or 'beer'. Þórr follows a question about 'seed'/'grain' with one about ale presumably because malt was used in the brewing process.

- 102 'Ale'.
- 103 'Beer'.
- 104 'Liquor'.
- 105 'Bright liquid'.
- 106 'Mead'.
- 107 Giants again. Suttungr was a giant who owned the mead of poetry; see *Háv.* 104, 109 and *FSk.* 34 (Suttungi).
- 108 'Drink'.
- 109 I.e., (rune-)staves, which represent wisdom (cf. *Vm.* 55). Here the term probably also alludes to the sun's rays, imagined as piercing staff-like weapons.
- 110 Literally, 'you're dayed up, dwarf'. Alvíss is above ground at daybreak.
- 111 Alvíss is presumably destroyed, probably by petrification, having been tricked by Þórr into being above ground at dawn. Cf. *HHv.* 29–30, *Hdl.* 49(?).

Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri

This poem is headed *Völsungakviða* ‘Poem of the Völsungar’ in R, but is now generally known as *Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri* ‘The Earlier/Former Lay of Helgi Hundingsbani’ (HH. I). Preserved on R fol. 20r–22r, it is the first poem in this manuscript’s heroic group, as classified by many modern scholars. It is also the first of two works in R about a legendary hero called *Helgi* ‘Holy One’ who slew a certain King Hundingr, the second being now known as *Helgakviða Hundingsbana önnur* (HH. II) ‘The Second Lay of Helgi Hundingsbani’.¹ This Helgi is the half-brother of Sigurðr, greatest hero of the Völsungar, who figures prominently in subsequent poems in R. Somewhat awkwardly, it may seem, the two texts about Helgi Hundingsbani are separated by a third poem, now called *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* ‘The Lay of Helgi Hjörvarðsson’ (HHv.), about a different Helgi, who was thought to have been reborn, possibly as Helgi Hundingsbani. It may be that the two Helgis are ultimately the same figure, ‘probably variants derived from a common ritual pattern in which a Helgi “the hallowed one” mated with a goddess, probably of tribal sovereignty, and was ritually slain by a near relative’.²

HH. I is in *fornyrðislag*. It is distinguished stylistically by having more kennings and other poetic terms than any other Eddic poem except *Hym*. Also, as one scholar observes, its ‘language is rich in new compounds which find their closest parallels in skaldic poetry’.³ Similarly, ‘[t]he spirit of the poem is that of skaldic panegyric, glorifying the victorious king’.⁴ The poem’s language, burnished by a poet ‘of brilliant surfaces’,⁵ and character have prompted the proposal that it was composed in the mid to late eleventh century at a royal court, possibly that of Magnús Óláfsson of Norway, though it may draw on earlier material.

The three Helgi-poems head the heroic poems of R, within which they form a subgroup. The association of the first and third with the subject matter of subsequent poems of the Eddic Völsung-Niflung cycle appears tangential and probably arose fairly late.

1 The relationship between these two texts seems likely to involve both borrowing and the use of shared inherited oral tradition.

2 J. Harris, ‘Eddic Poetry as Oral Poetry: The Evidence of Parallel Passages in the Helgi Poems for Questions of Composition and Performance’, in R. J. Glendinning and Haraldur Bessason, ed., *Edda: A Collection of Essays* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1983), pp. 210–42 at 214.

3 Harris, ‘Eddic Poetry’, p. 226.

4 Harris, ‘Eddic Poetry’, pp. 226–27.

5 Harris, ‘Eddic Poetry’, p. 230.

HH. I, or a text very like it, was a source for chapters 8 to 9 of *VS*, which treat the same story, though with some differences of personal and place names. The saga's account of the central flyting between Helgi's half-brother, Sinfjötli, and Guðmundr, brother of Höðbroddr, in *HH. I* 34–44 (a shorter version of which appears in *HH. II* 24–29 [19–24]) helps establish which character says what. This type of verbal contest also appears in *HHv.* 12–30, is exemplified earlier in **R** by *Hrbl.* and *Ls.*, and recurs in other medieval Scandinavian texts.

Saxo Grammaticus gives a different account of Helgi's career in *GD* (2.5.2–7). Additionally, Helgi appears briefly in chapters 4 and 5 of the fourteenth-century *Nornagests þátr* 'Story of Nornagestr'.

Synopsis

HH. I begins in the distant past, with Helgi's birth to Borghildr and Sigmundr (father of the hero Sigurðr who appears in subsequent poems). Helgi's arrival is attended by auspicious signs, and his greatness is ordained by the Nornir, who arrange the threads of his destiny (1–4). One raven expresses to another its pleasure at Helgi's birth—the child who stands in armour when only a day old will slay men, giving them corpses to eat (5–6).

Sigmundr confers a leek on his son, whom the people considered a descendant of *Dagr* 'Day', a boy whom they believed would bring them fruitful years (7). Sigmundr also names his son, gives him certain places (at least some probably mythical) and a sword (8).

Helgi grows up a generous ruler (9) and, while still a teenager, slays Hundingr (10). Hundingr's sons demand compensation (11), which Helgi refuses (12). Battle ensues and Helgi kills all four brothers (14).

Radiant valkyries appear (15), and Helgi asks if they will come home with him and his men (16). One of them, later identified as Sigrún, says they have better things to do (17). She reveals that she has been promised in marriage to a king called Höðbroddr, whom she likens to a kitten (18). She invites Helgi to fight him (19), which Helgi agrees to do (20). He gathers his forces (21–22), and they set sail (23). The size of their naval force is emphasized (24–26), as is the clamour of their sea-voyage (27–28). Aided by Sigrún, they survive an attempt by the sea-goddess, Rán, to capsize them (29–30), and arrive offshore at their destination, to the concern of onlookers (31).

Guðmundr, Höðbroddr's brother, asks who the visitors are (32). A flyting ensues between him and Sinfjötli, Helgi's half-brother, in which they accuse each other of various kinds of unmanliness (33–44). Helgi says they would do better to fight than trade vain insults (45), as these opponents have shown themselves to have spirit (46).

Guðmundr sends out horse-messengers (47). They meet Höðbroddr outside his stronghold and inform him of Helgi's arrival. Höðbroddr asks why they look worried (48). They describe the multitude of Helgi's forces and declare that he will attack soon (49–50).

Hǫðbroddr summons every available man to fight with him (51–52). Immediately, the battle begins, with Helgi always in the thick of the fighting (53). Valkyries protect him (54), and Sigrún ends the poem by announcing that he has killed Hǫðbroddr and that he will enjoy both lands and her (55–56).

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Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri

Hér hefr upp kvæði frá Helga Hundingsbana *ok bana þeira Hǫðbrodds.*

Völsungakviða

1. Ár var alda, þat er arar gullu,
hnigu heilög vogtn af Himinfjöllum,
þá hafði Helga inn hugumstóra
Borghildr borit í Brálundi.
2. Nótt varð í bœ, Nornir kvómu,
þær er ǫðlingi aldr um skópu;
þann báðu fylki frægstan verða
ok buðlunga beztan þikkja.
3. Sneru þær af afli ørlögþáttu,
þá er borgir braut í Brálundi;
þær um greiddu gullin símu
ok und mána sal miðjan festu.
4. Þær austr ok vestr enda fálu,
þar átti lofðungr land á milli;
brá nipt Nera á norðrvega
einni festi — ey bað hon halda.
5. Eitt var at angri Ylfinga nið,
ok þeiri meyju er munuð föddi:
hrafni kvað at hrafni — sat á hám meiði —
andvanr átu: 'Ek veit nökkt!
6. 'Stendr í brynu burr Sigmundar,
dœgrs eins gamall, nú er dagr kominn!
Hvessir augu sem hildingar —
sá er varga vinr — vit skulum teitir!'
7. Drótt þótti sá döglingr vera,
kváðu með gumnum góð ár komin;
sjálfr gekk vísi ór vígþrimu
ungum fœra ítrlauk gramí.
8. Gaf hann 'Helga' nafn, ok Hringstaði,
Sólfjöll, Snæfjöll ok Sigarsvöllu,
Hringstöð, Hátún ok Himinvanga,
blóðorm búinn, brœðr Sinfjötla.

The Earlier Lay of Helgi Hundingsbani

Here begins a poem about Helgi Hundingsbani and the death of Höðbroddr and his men.

Lay of the Völsungar¹

1. It was early in ages² when eagles screamed,³
holy waters bowed down⁴ from Himinfjöll,⁵
when to Helgi the great-hearted
Borghildr⁶ had given birth in Brálundr.⁷
2. Night fell in the farmstead, Nornir⁸ came,
those who shaped a life for the princeling;
they decreed that he would become the most famous king
and be thought the best of Buðli's descendants.⁹
3. They twisted fate-strands with strength,
when he broke strongholds in Brálundr;¹⁰
they set in order the golden strings
and fastened them under the middle of the moon's hall.¹¹
4. East and west they concealed the ends,
where the praiseworthy one¹² possessed lands in between;¹³
Neri's kinswoman¹⁴ threw onto the north-road¹⁵
one fastening¹⁶ — she decreed that it should always hold.
5. One thing caused anguish to the kinsman of the Ylfingar,¹⁷
and to the girl who gave birth to the beloved one:
raven spoke to raven — it sat on a high branch¹⁸ —
in anticipation of food: 'I know something!'
6. 'Sigmundr's¹⁹ son stands in his mail-coat,
one day old,²⁰ now day has come!²¹
He whets his eyes as warriors do —
that one's a friend of wolves²² — we shall be cheerful!'
7. He seemed to the host²³ to be a descendant of Dagr,²⁴
they said good years²⁵ had come among men;
the leader²⁶ himself went from battle-turmoil
to bring a noble leek²⁷ to the young warrior.
8. He²⁸ gave him the name 'Helgi', and Hringstaðir,²⁹
Sólfjöll,³⁰ Snæfjöll³¹ and Sigarsvellir,³²
Hringstöð,³³ Hátún³⁴ and Himinvangar,³⁵
[and] a decorated blood-snake,³⁶ to the brother of Sinfjötli.³⁷

9. Pá nam at vaxa fyr vina brjósti,
 álmr ítrborinn, ynðis ljóma;
 hann galt ok gaf gull verðungu,
 sparði eigi hilmir hodd blóðrekin.
10. Skammt lét vísi vígs at bíða,
 þá er fylkir var fimmtán vetra;
 ok hann harðan lét Hunding veginn,
 þann er lengi réð löndum ok þegnum.
11. Kvöddu síðan Sigmundar bur
 auðs ok hringa Hundings synir,
 þvíat þeir áttu jøfri at gjalda
 fjárnám mikit ok fóður dauða.
12. Létat buðlungr bótir uppi,
 né niðja in heldr nefgjöld fá;
 ván kvað hann mundu veðrs ins mikla
 grára geira ok gremi Óðins.
13. Fara hildingar hjörstefnu til,
 þeirar er lögðu at Logafjöllum;
 sleit Fróða frið fjanda á milli,
 fara Viðris grey valgjorn um ey.
14. Settisk vísi, þá er vegit hafði
 Álf ok Eyjólf, und Arasteini,
 Hjørvarð ok Hávarð, Hundings sonu —
 farit hafði hann allri ætt geir-Mímis.
15. Þá brá ljóma af Logafjöllum,
 en af þeim ljómum leiptrir kvómu;
 þá var und hjálmmum á Himinvanga;
 brynjur várú þeira blóði stoknar,
 en af geirum geislar stóðu.
16. Frá árliga ór úlfíði
 doglingr at því dísir suðrœnar,
 ef þær vildi heim með hildingum
 þá nótt fara; þrymr var álma.
17. En af hesti Högna dóttir —
 líddi randa rym — ræsi sagði:
 'Hygg ek at vér eigm aðrar sýslur
 en með baugbrota bjór at drekka.

9. Then he began to grow in the bosom of friends,
a noble-born elm,³⁸ in the light of bliss;
he repaid and gave gold to his retinue,
the ruler did not spare blood-splattered hoards.
10. The leader³⁹ waited [only] a short time for war,
once the marshal⁴⁰ was fifteen winters old;
and he had slain the hard Hundingr,⁴¹
the one who long ruled lands and thanes.
11. From Sigmundr's boy Hundingr's sons
then demanded riches and rings,
because they had to requite the boar⁴²
for his great wealth-taking and their father's death.
12. Buðli's descendant⁴³ did not offer up remedies,⁴⁴
none the quicker did the relatives⁴⁵ receive kin-compensation;
he said there would be the prospect of the great storm
of grey spears⁴⁶ and the anger of Óðinn.⁴⁷
13. Warriors advance to the sword-assembly,⁴⁸
that which they laid down⁴⁹ at Logafjöll;⁵⁰
Fróði's peace⁵¹ was torn apart between enemies,
Viðrir's corpse-eager bitches⁵² go about the island.
14. The leader⁵³ sat himself down, when he had slain
Álfr⁵⁴ and Eyjólfr,⁵⁵ beneath Arasteinn,⁵⁶
Hjörvarðr⁵⁷ and Hávarðr,⁵⁸ the sons of Hundingr —
he had destroyed the whole family of spear-Mímir.⁵⁹
15. Then light sprang from Logafjöll,
and from those lights came lightnings;
then it⁶⁰ was under helmets on Himinvangar;⁶¹
their mail-coats were bespattered with blood,
and from their spears stood rays of light.
16. Dagr's descendant asked this early,
from a wolf-lair,⁶² of the southern women,⁶³
if they would go home with the warriors that night;
there was thrumming of elm-bows.
17. And from her horse Högni's daughter⁶⁴ —
the din of shield-rims⁶⁵ subsided — spoke to the prince:
'I think that we have other tasks
than to drink beer with the ring-breaker.'⁶⁶

18. 'Hefir minn faðir meyju sinni
grímmum heitit Granmars syni;
en ek hefi, Helgi, Höðbrodd kveðinn
konung óneisan sem kattar son!'
19. 'Þá kómr fylkir fára nátta,
nema þú honum vísit valstefnu til
eða mey nemir frá mildingi.'
20. 'Uggi eigi þú Ísungs bana!
Fyrr mun dólga dynr, nema ek dauðr sják!'
21. Sendi áru allvaldr þaðan,
of lopt ok um lög, leiðar at biðja,
iðgnógan Ógnar ljóma
brögnum bjóða ok burum þeira.
22. 'Biðið skjótliga til skipa ganga
ok ór Brandeyju búna verða!'
Þaðan beið þengill, unz þinig kvómu
halir hundmargir ór Heðinseyju.
23. Ok þar af ströndum, ór Stafnsnesi,
beit hans út skriðu ok búin gulli;
spurði Helgi Hjörleif at því:
'Hefir þú kannaða koni óneisa?'
24. En ungr konungr qðrum sagði:
'Seint', kvað, 'at telja af Tröndeyri
langhöfðuð skip und líðöndum,
þau er í Qrvasund utan fóru!'
25. 'Tólf hundruð tryggra manna,
þó er í Hátúnum hálfu fleira
víglið konungs — ván erum rómu!'
26. Svá brá stýrir stafntjoldum af,
at mildinga mengi vakði,
ok döglingar dagsbrún sjá,
ok siklingar sneru upp við tré
vefnistungum á Varinsfirði.
27. Varð ára ymr ok járna glymr,
brast rönd við rönd, reru víkingar;
eisandi gekk und qðlingum
lofðungs floti, löndum fjarri.

18. 'My father has promised his maiden
to the fierce son of Grammarr;⁶⁷
but, Helgi, I've called Hǫðbroddr
a king bold as a cat's son!⁶⁸
19. 'That marshal will come in a few nights,
unless you direct him to a slaughter-assembly⁶⁹
or take the maiden from the munificent prince.'⁷⁰
20. 'Don't you be afraid of Ísungr's slayer!⁷¹
First there will be the din of combats, unless I'm dead!'
21. The all-ruler⁷² sent emissaries from there,
through air and over sea, to muster sailors,
to offer abundant light of Ógn⁷³
to men and to their boys.
22. 'Bid them go speedily to the ships
and prepare [to depart] from Brandey!'⁷⁴
There the prince waited, until there came
innumerable heroes from Heðinsey.⁷⁵
23. And there from the shores, from Stafnsnes,⁷⁶
his boats glided out and [they were] adorned with gold;
at that Helgi asked Hjørleifr:⁷⁷
'Have you inspected the bold men?'
24. And the young king spoke to others.⁷⁸
'[It would be a] slow [task],' he said, 'to tally from Trønueyrr⁷⁹
the long-headed ships⁸⁰ beneath the sailors,
those which set out into Qrvasund!'⁸¹
25. 'Twelve hundred trusty men,
though in Hátún the king's battle-host
is double the size⁸² — I expect a din!'⁸³
26. The captain took down the stem-tents,
so that the multitude of munificent men awoke,
and the descendants of Dagr see 'day's brow',⁸⁴
and the princes hoisted up by the mast
weave-fastened [cloths]⁸⁵ in Varinsfjorð.⁸⁶
27. There was din of oars and clanking of irons,⁸⁷
shield-rim clashed with shield-rim, vikings rowed;
plunging ahead beneath noblemen
went the prince's fleet, far from lands.

28. Svá var at heyra, er saman kvómu,
Kólgu systir ok kilir langir,
sem bjørg eða brim brotna myndi!
29. Draga bað Helgi há segl ofarr,
varðat hrönnum höfn þingloga,
þá er ógurlig Ægis dóttir
stagstjórnムorum steypa vildi.
30. En þeim sjálfum Sigrún ofan,
fólkdjørf, um barg ok fari þeira;
snørisk ramliga Rán ór hendi
gjálfrodýr konungs at Gnipalundi.
31. Svát þar um aptan í Unavágum
flaust fagrbúin fljóta knáttu;
en þeir sjálfir frá Svarinshaugi
með hermðar hug her könnuðu.
32. Frá góðborinn Guðmundr at því:
'Hverr er landreki, sá er liði stýrir,
ok hann feiknalið færir at landi?'
33. Sinfjotli kvað — sløng upp við rá
rauðum skildi, rönd var ór gulli;
þar var sundvørðr, sá er svara kunni
ok við qðlinga orðum skipa!
34. 'Segðu þat í aptan, er svínum gefr
ok tíkr yðrar teygir at solli,
at sé Ylfingar austan komnir,
gunnar gjarnir, frá Gnipalundi!'
35. 'Þar mun Høðbroddr Helga finna,
flugtrauðan gram, í flota miðjum,
sá er opt hefir qrnu sadda,
meðan þú á kvernunum kystir þýjar!'
36. 'Fátt mantu, fylkir, fornra spjalla,
er þú qðlingum ósónnu bregðr!
Þú hefir etnar úlfa krásir
ok brœðr þínum at bana orðit,
opt sár sugin með svölum munni —
hefr í hreysi hvarleiðr skriðit!'

28. Thus it was to hear, when they came together,
Kólga's sister⁸⁸ and the long keels,
as if cliffs or sea would break!
29. Helgi had the high sail drawn higher,
the crew did not shrink from the meeting with the waves,⁸⁹
when an awful daughter of Ægir⁹⁰
wanted to capsize the stay-bridle-horses.⁹¹
30. And, from above, Sigrún,⁹² army-brave,
safeguarded them and their ship;
strongly the king's roaring-sea beast⁹³ wrenched itself
from Rán⁹⁴ — from her hand — at Gnipalundr.⁹⁵
31. So that there, during the evening, in Unavágár,⁹⁶
the attractively equipped ships floated;
and they themselves⁹⁷ from Svarinshaugt⁹⁸
scrutinized the army with an anxious mind.
32. Well-born⁹⁹ Guðmundr¹⁰⁰ asked this:
'Who is the land-ruler, the one who steers this force
and leads a fell force to land?'¹⁰¹
33. Sinfjötli spoke — he slung up by the yardarm
his red shield, its rim was of gold;
there was a sound-warder,¹⁰² the one who knew how to answer
and exchange words with noblemen!
34. 'Say this this evening, when you're feeding swine
and enticing your bitches to their swill,
that the Ylfingar have come from the east,
eager for battle, from¹⁰³ Gnipalundr!
35. 'There Höðbroddr will find Helgi,
a flight-averse prince, in the fleet's midst,
the one who has often sated eagles,¹⁰⁴
while you were kissing slave-girls at querns!'
36. 'You remember, marshal, few ancient tales,
when you fling falsehoods at noblemen!
You've eaten wolves' dainties¹⁰⁵
and brought about your brother's death,¹⁰⁶
often sucked wounds with a cold mouth —
hated everywhere, you've slithered into a heap of stones!'¹⁰⁷

37. ‘Þú vart völva í Varinseyju,
skollvís kona, bartu skrök saman!
Kvaztu engi mann eiga vilja,
segg brynjaðan, nema Sinfjötla!
38. ‘Þú vart in skœða, skass, valkyrja,
þotul, ámátlig, at Alföður!
Mundu einherjar allir berjask,
svévis kona, um sakar þínar!
39. ‘Níu áttu vit á nesi Ságu
úlfa alna — ek var einn faðir þeira!’
40. ‘Faðir varattu Fenrisúlfa,
qlum ellri, svá at ek muna,
sízt þik geldu fyr Gnipalundi
þursa meyjar, á Þórsnesi!
41. ‘Stjúpr vartu Siggeirs, látt und stqðum heima,
vargljóðum vanr á viðum úti!
Kómu þér ógogn qll at hendi,
þá er brœðr þínum brjóst raufaðir!
Görðir þik frægjan af firinverkum!’
42. ‘Þú vart brúðr Grana á Brávelli,
gullbitluð, vart gør til rásar!
Hafða ek þér móðri mart skeið riðit,
svangri und sǫðli, simul, forbergis!
43. ‘Sveinn þóttir þú siðlauss vera,
þá er þú Gullnis geitr mólkaðir,
en í annat sinn Ímðar dóttir,
tótrughypja — vill þú tølu lengri?’
44. ‘Fyrr vilda ek at Frekasteini
hrafna seðja á hræum þínum,
en tíkr yðrar teygja at solli
eða gefa goltum — deili grøm við þik!’
45. ‘Væri ykkr, Sinfjötli, scemra myklu
gunni at heyja ok glaða ǫrnú
en sé ónýtum orðum at bregðask,
þótt hringbrotar heiptir deili!
46. ‘Pikkjat mér góðir Granmars synir,
þó dugir siklingum satt at mæla;
þeir hafa markat á Móinsheimum
at hug hafa hjörum at bregða.’

37. 'You were a seeress on Varinsey,¹⁰⁸
a deceit-wise woman, you drew together lies!
 You said you wanted to possess no man,
 [no] mail-coated fighter, except Sinfjötli!
38. 'You were the wounding one, a witch, a valkyrie,
 awful, immensely mighty, at Alfaðir's!¹⁰⁹
The unique champions would all fight each other,
 headstrong woman, for your sake!¹¹⁰
39. 'Nine wolves we two had begotten on Sága's ness¹¹¹ —
 I alone was their father!'
40. 'You weren't the father of Fenrir's wolves,¹¹²
 older than all, as I recall,
 because giants' maidens gelded you
 before Gnipalundr, on Þórsnes!¹¹³
41. 'You were Siggeir's stepson,¹¹⁴ you were at home lying under haystacks,¹¹⁵
 accustomed to wolf-songs¹¹⁶ out in the woods!
 Every sort of disaster came upon you,
 when you pierced your brother's breast!¹¹⁷
 You made yourself famous from dreadful deeds!'
42. 'You were Grani's bride¹¹⁸ on Brávöllr,¹¹⁹
 gold-bridled, you were made for galloping!
I had ridden you, giantess(?),¹²⁰ to exhaustion on many roads,
 scrawny beneath a saddle, downhill!
43. 'You appeared to be an indecent youth,
 when you milked Gullnir's goats,¹²¹
and on another occasion [you were] Imðr's daughter,¹²²
 one with a tattered dress — do you want a longer list?'¹²³
44. 'I would sooner sate ravens
 on your corpses¹²⁴ at Frekasteinn,¹²⁵
 than entice your bitches to their swill
 or feed gelded boars¹²⁶ — may fiends deal with you!'
- 45.¹²⁷ 'It would be more fitting by far, Sinfjötli, for you two
 to engage in war and to gladden eagles
 than it is to cast useless words at each other,
 even if the ring-breakers deal in hatreds!¹²⁸
46. 'Granmarr's sons don't seem good to me,
 yet it befits princes to speak truly;
they have made it clear at Móinsheimar¹²⁹
 that they have the spirit to wield swords.'¹³⁰

47. Peir af ríki renna létu
 Svipuð ok Sveggjuð, Sólheima til,
 dala döggtóta, døkkvar hlíðir;
 skalf Mistar marr, hvars megar fóru.
48. Mcettu þeir tiggja í túnhliði,
 sogðu stríðliga stilli kvómu;
 úti stóð Høðbroddr, hjálmi faldinn,
 hugði hann jóreið ættar sinnar:
 'Hví er hermðar litr á Hniflungum?'
49. 'Snúask hér at sandi snoefgir kjólar,
 rakka hirtir ok rár langar,
 skildir margir, skafnar árar,
 gófugt lið gylfa, glaðir Ylfingar.
50. 'Ganga fimmtán fólk upp á land,
 þó er í Sogn út sjau þúsundir;
 liggja hér í grindum fyr Gnipalundi
 brimdýr blásvort ok búin gulli.
 Þar er miklu mest mengi þeira —
 munu nú Helgi hjørþing dvala!
51. 'Renni raukn bitluð til reginþinga,
 en Sporvitnir at Sparinsheiði,
 Mélnir ok Mýlnir til Myrkviðar!
 Látið engi mann eptir sitja,
 þeira er benlogum bregða kunni!
52. 'Bjóði þér Högna ok Hrings sonum,
 Atla ok Yngva, Qlf inum gamla;
 þeir ru gjarnir gunni at heyja —
 látum Völsunga viðrnám fá!'
53. Svípr einn var þat, er saman kvómu
 fölvir oddar at Frekasteini;
 ey var Helgi, Hundings bani,
 fyrstr í fólk, þar er firar børðusk,
 œstr á ímu, alltrauðr flugar —
 sá hafði hilmir hart móðakarn!
54. Kómu þar ór himni hjálmvitr ofan —
 óx geira gnýr — þær er grami hlífðu;
 þá kvað þat Sigrún — sárvisr flugu,
 át hálu skær af Hugins barri:

47. They¹³¹ made run from the realm
Svipuðr and Sveggjuðr,¹³² to Sólheimar,¹³³
[through] dewy dales, [over] dark hillsides;
Mist's sea¹³⁴ shook, wherever the young men went.
48. They met the prince¹³⁵ at the courtyard-gate,
said severely that a king had come;¹³⁶
outside stood Höðbroddr, encased in a helmet,
he considered the horse-ride of his kin:
'Why is there a look of anxiety on the Hniflunar?'¹³⁷
- 49.¹³⁸ 'Swift longships head to the sand¹³⁹ here,
harts of mast-rings¹⁴⁰ and long yardarms,
many shields, shaven oars,¹⁴¹
the noble host of a sea-king, happy Ylfingar.'
50. 'Fifteen companies go ashore,
yet there are seven thousand out in Sogn,¹⁴²
there lie here within the gates¹⁴³ before Gnipalundr
blue-black sea-beasts¹⁴⁴ and [they're] adorned with gold.
There is their greatest multitude by far —
Helgi won't delay the sword-meeting now!'
- 51.¹⁴⁵ 'May bridled horses run to mighty assemblies,
and Sporvitnir¹⁴⁶ to Sparinsheiðr,¹⁴⁷
Mélnir¹⁴⁸ and Mýlnir¹⁴⁹ to Myrkviðr!¹⁵⁰
Let no man linger behind,
of those who know how to wield wound-flames!¹⁵¹
52. 'Summon Högni¹⁵² and Hringr's¹⁵³ sons,
Atli and Yngvi, Álfr the Old;
they're eager to engage in war —
let's give the Volsungar some resistance!'
53. It was in only a blink of an eye that
pale weapon-points came together at Frekasteinn;
Helgi, slayer of Hundingr, was always
first in the army,¹⁵⁴ where men fought each other,
keen on fighting, wholly averse to flight —
that king had a hard mood-acorn!¹⁵⁵
54. There came from the sky helmet-creatures,¹⁵⁶ from above —
the clamour of spears¹⁵⁷ grew — they who protected the prince,¹⁵⁸
then Sigrún said this — wound-creatures¹⁵⁹ flew,
the horse of the troll-woman ate from Huginn's barley.¹⁶⁰

55. 'Heill skaltu, vísi, virða njóta,
áttstafir Yngva, ok una lífi,
er þú felt hefir inn flugartrauða
jofur, þann er olli ægis dauða!
56. 'Ok þér, buðlungr, samir bæði vel
rauðir baugar ok in ríkja mær!
Heill skaltu, buðlungr, bæði njóta
Högna dóttur ok Hringstaða,
sigrs ok landa — þá er sókn lokit!'

55. 'Unharmed,¹⁶¹ prince, you shall profit from men,
descendant of Yngvi,¹⁶² and enjoy life,
since you have felled the flight-averse boar,¹⁶³
the one who caused the death of a frightful one!¹⁶⁴
56. 'And for you, Buðli's descendant, are most befitting
both red rings and the mighty maiden!¹⁶⁵
Unharmed, Buðli's descendant, you shall enjoy both
Högni's daughter and Hringstaðir,
victory and lands — then the battle is concluded!'

Textual Apparatus to *Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri*

Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri] This title is not in R but supplied from later, paper manuscripts

The introductory line of prose is rubricated but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this edition therefore draws on the transcription therein and prior editions

ok bana þeira Hǫðbrodds] R apparently reads *þeira h.*

Vølsungakviða] Illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this edition therefore relies on the transcription therein, in which *ga qvipa* is bracketed

1/1 Ár] The Á is a large, red, decorative initial in R, which clearly marks the start of a major new section

5/3 *ok*] R *er*

7/4 *góð*] Missing in R, which has a blank space

8/3 *Sólfjöll*] R *sól fivll*

9/8 *blóðrekin*] Or *blóðrekinn*

10/4 *fimmtán*] R xv.

11/3 *ok*] R absent

15/9 *geirum*] R *geiror*

22/6 *þinig*] R *þing*

23/1 *ströndum*] R *stöndom*

31/1 *Svát*] R *Sat*

31/4 *fljóta*] R *flita*

35/3 *flugtrauðan*] R *flaug trauðan*

46/8 *hjorum*] R *hioriom*

47/8 *hvars*] R *hvar*

52/5 *þeir ru*] R *þeiro*

54/6 *flugu*] R *fluga*

54/7 *hálu*] R *haulþa*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 This poem appears distinct from, but related to, ‘the ancient *Vølsungakviða*’ cited in HH. II. The Vølsungar are descendants of Vølsungr, a king of Húnaland ‘Hunland’, according to VS 2.
- 2 The same phrase appears in Vsp. 3.
- 3 Cf. HHv. 6.
- 4 I.e., ‘poured’, but it might be intimated that the falling waters humbly acknowledged the new-born Helgi’s destined status.

- 5 'Heaven/Sky Fells', possibly a mythological term for 'clouds', perhaps especially cumulonimbus, in which case thunder and lightning may be implicitly present. It was traditional for new-borns to be sprinkled with water, and here *Helgi* 'Holy One' is consecrated by holy water.
- 6 'Stronghold Battle', first wife of Sigmundr.
- 7 ON *lundr* means 'grove', but the meaning of *Brá* is uncertain (perhaps 'bright', so 'Bright Grove').
- 8 Supernatural females who determined the fates of humans; cf. *Vsp.* 20.
- 9 Buðli was a legendary king. 'Descendant of Buðli' is a term for 'prince.'
- 10 A somewhat puzzling line, perhaps suggestive of a violent birth, amid associated warfare, from the womb of *Borghildr* 'Stronghold Battle'; cf. the last line of st. 1. Or perhaps *þá er borgir braut* is an impersonal expression meaning 'when strongholds broke' (literally 'when it broke strongholds').
- 11 The 'moon's hall' is the night sky. In this stanza and the next, the Nornir should be understood as twisting or 'plying' three strands of Helgi's fate, respectively fastened at one end to the east, west and north, and all attached at the other end to the middle of the sky, in order to form a single, stronger thread of destiny which hangs down from the suspended midpoint.
- 12 Helgi.
- 13 Cf. *Rm.* 14.
- 14 One of the Nornir. *Neri* is obscure, but possibly relates to *Norr* 'Narrow (One)', the father of *Nótt* 'Night' in *Vm.* 25, *Alv.* 29.
- 15 I.e., to the north.
- 16 One of the strands of Helgi's destiny.
- 17 Sigmundr, the *Ylfingar* 'Wolfings' (OE *Wylfingas*) being his dynasty. The cause of the anguish suffered by Helgi's parents is probably his extraordinarily youthful preparedness for battle, which suggests he may die much sooner than he would otherwise.
- 18 Alternatively, 'it sat in a high tree' or 'it sat on a high gallows'.
- 19 'Victory Hand/Protection'.
- 20 Cf. *Vsp.* 32, *BDr.* 11.
- 21 This line might intimate that Helgi is a reincarnation of *Dagr*, a mythical-sounding figure who may have personified the 'day'; see the next stanza.
- 22 The idea is that Helgi will kill men, whose bodies will be eaten by wolves and ravens. Cf. *HH. I* 16.
- 23 I.e., the host of warriors, or people in general.
- 24 'Day'. The etymology of *döglingr* 'descendant of Dagr(?)' is disputed, but here the word may suggest the daylight that will contribute to a fruitful year (cf. *HH. I* 26). An alternative, generalized translation, 'prince', seems bland in the context. For Helgi's killing by a man called Dagr who wields Óðinn's spear, see *HH. II* 29 pr. Sigurðr is called *döglingr* in *Gör. I* 14.
- 25 I.e., years in which there would be a fruitful harvest.
- 26 Sigmundr.

- 27 Leek or garlic was deemed to have magically protective properties. There is a possibility, however, that 'leek' is here a metaphor for the sword of the next stanza.
- 28 Sigmundr.
- 29 'Ring Steads' is a place-name, like the next six proper nouns in this stanza. It might be modern-day Ringsted on the Danish island of Zealand.
- 30 'Sun Fells'.
- 31 'Snow Fells'.
- 32 'Sigarr's Plains'; cf. Sigersted, Zealand. In *HH. II 4*, Sigarr is the name of a brother of Hogni, father of Sigrún.
- 33 'Ring Harbour'.
- 34 'High Home-Meadow(s)'.
- 35 'Heaven Fields'.
- 36 I.e., sword.
- 37 I.e., to Helgi. Sinfjötli, Helgi's half-brother, was Sigmundr's son by his sister, Signý, according to VS 7. His name is interpretable as 'Sinew-Fettered One', but its first element may originally have been *Sindr-* 'Cinder-/Ash-'. In Old English he is called simply *Fitela* 'Spotted One(?)'.
- 38 Old Norse poetry often likens men to trees.
- 39 Helgi.
- 40 Helgi again.
- 41 A king whose name means 'Descendant of a Hound'. Several kings of this name appear in *GD*. VS 9 briefly describes this battle.
- 42 When not denoting an actual boar, *jofurr* is, as here, a common metaphor for 'warrior' or 'prince', here Helgi.
- 43 Helgi. The term *buðlungr*, literally 'Buðli's descendant', often signifies merely 'prince'.
- 44 I.e., pay compensation.
- 45 The sons of Hundingr.
- 46 A metaphor for 'battle', in which spears 'rain' from the sky.
- 47 The war-god Óðinn's iconic weapon is the spear.
- 48 Battlefield.
- 49 I.e., appointed.
- 50 'Mountains of Flame(s)'.
- 51 Fróði was a legendary king whose peaceful reign became proverbial.
- 52 *Viðrir* is an alias of Óðinn, which might identify him as a god of the weather (*veðr*); his bitches are wolves.
- 53 Helgi.
- 54 Possibly 'Noble Wolf' or 'Elf'.
- 55 Possibly 'Luck(y) Wolf'.
- 56 'Eagle's (or Eagles') Stone'.
- 57 'Sword Warder'.
- 58 'High Warder'.

- 59 Mímir is a mythical figure, possibly a giant, with whom Hundingr and his family are here associated.
- 60 The light, ostensibly at least. However, there might be some textual corruption, including the loss of a preceding line.
- 61 This line refers to radiant, armoured valkyries.
- 62 Or ‘wolf-wood’. Either way, this is an obscure reference. Perhaps Helgi, like Sigmundr and Sinfjötli in VS 8, had spent time as a wolf; cf. *HH. I* 6.
- 63 More specifically, supernatural women — here valkyries.
- 64 A valkyrie, later called Sigrún. Her father, Högni, is distinct from Högni, brother of Gunnarr and Guðrún, who appears in subsequent poems of the *Poetic Edda*.
- 65 A kenning for ‘battle’; ‘shield-rims’ can be a synecdoche for ‘shields’.
- 66 I.e., leader. The breaking of rings enabled lords to distribute wealth to their followers.
- 67 ‘Moustached Famous One’ or ‘Bewiskered Horse’, whose son is Höðbroddr.
- 68 Or ‘blameless/innocent as a kitten’.
- 69 I.e., unless Helgi challenges him to battle.
- 70 Possibly an ironic designation, if it is not merely formulaic.
- 71 Höðbroddr. Ísungr is obscure.
- 72 Helgi.
- 73 If Ógn, possibly ‘Terror’, is the name of a river, its ‘light’ is gold.
- 74 ‘Ship-Beak Isle’, a common name.
- 75 ‘Heðinn’s Island’, now the Baltic island of Hiddensee.
- 76 ‘Prow’s Ness’.
- 77 ‘Sword Leaving’, one of Helgi’s men. In VS 9 he is called *Leifr* ‘Leaving’, ‘Inheritance’.
- 78 Or ‘to another man’.
- 79 ‘Crane Sandbank’.
- 80 A reference to ships with long prows, perhaps elongated dragon-heads.
- 81 ‘Arrows’ Sound’, perhaps now Stralsund in northern Germany. VS 9 has ór Nørvasundum ‘from the Straits of Gibraltar’, rather outlandishly.
- 82 Literally, ‘more by half’.
- 83 The din of battle. This stanza is perhaps spoken by the captain mentioned in the next stanza.
- 84 The sun rising over the horizon.
- 85 Sails.
- 86 ‘Varinn’s Fjord’, possibly the estuary at Warnemünde, Mecklenburg, Germany.
- 87 Iron weapons and armour.
- 88 A kenning for ‘wave’. Kólga is one of the daughters of the sea-giant Ægir, who personify waves; her name may be related to *kala* ‘to become cold’.
- 89 I.e., when the waves crashed into the ship.
- 90 A wave.
- 91 Ships, imagined as horses with stays (mast-supported ropes) for bridles.

- 92 'Victory Rune', a valkyrie.
- 93 Ship.
- 94 'Plunder', wife of the sea-giant *Ægir*. She was thought to drown people at sea.
- 95 Perhaps 'Overhanging Grove'.
- 96 'Contentment Bays'.
- 97 Apparently Helgi's foes.
- 98 'Svarinn's (Burial-)Mound'; possibly one of the hills near Schwerin, Mecklenberg, Germany.
- 99 I.e., of noble birth. Alternatively, *goðborinn* 'god-born'.
- 100 'God/Battle Hand/Protection', Hǫðbroddr's brother.
- 101 Guðmundr's words are quoted, with variation, in *HH. II* 18 pr.
- 102 I.e., guardian of a sound. This refers to Sinfjötli, who acted as watchman.
- 103 Or 'at/to', if the emendation *at* is adopted.
- 104 I.e., who has often killed men, whose corpses became food for eagles.
- 105 Corpses.
- 106 See also *HH. I* 41. VS 8 describes how Sinfjötli and Sigmundr became werewolves, and how the former slew his young half-brothers. The present accusation is of a single fratricide, however.
- 107 Presumably a cairn. In this line and the previous one, Guðmundr likens Sinfjötli to a snake.
- 108 'Varinn's Island'. Cf. *Ls.* 24.
- 109 I.e., *Valhöll* 'Hall of the Slain', the dwelling of Óðinn, whose alias *Alfaðir* is usually interpreted as 'All Father'.
- 110 The 'unique champions' are fallen warriors whom Óðinn selects to join him in the afterlife in Valhöll, in preparation for the battles of Ragnarok.
- 111 Sága is a goddess. VS 8 has *á Láganesi* 'on Láganess'.
- 112 Fenrir is the apocalyptic wolf of Norse mythology.
- 113 'Þórr's Ness'. VS 8 has *á Þrasnesi* 'on Þrasness'.
- 114 King Siggeir was Signý's husband.
- 115 Cf. VS 8, which describes how Siggeir buried Sinfjötli and Sigmundr alive, but how they escaped thanks to Signý, who, before the mound was complete, threw down to them straw in which she had concealed food and Sigmundr's marvellous sword.
- 116 I.e., wolves' howling. Sinfjötli and Sigmundr spent time in the woods as werewolves, according to VS 8.
- 117 Cf. *HH. I* 36.
- 118 Grani was the stallion of Sigurðr, the hero of subsequent poems in the *Poetic Edda*.
- 119 Perhaps a reference to the eighth-century Battle of Brávellir, for which see especially the eighth book of *GD*.
- 120 Or perhaps 'witch', 'wolf' or 'cow'.
- 121 In VS 9 Sinfjötli declares that Hǫðbroddr's brother Granmarr (who corresponds to Guðmundr in the present poem) was *geitasvenn Gólnis jötuns* 'goatherd of the giant Gólnir'.
- 122 *Imðr* is the name of a giantess.

- 123 Or 'do you want a longer talk?'
- 124 I.e., the corpses of Sinfjötli and his men.
- 125 'Freki's Stone'. *Freki* is both a poetic term for 'wolf' and the name of one of Óðinn's wolves.
- 126 Here actual boars.
- 127 This stanza is spoken by Helgi, as is the following one.
- 128 Cf. *HH. II* 28.
- 129 'Moor-Creature's Homes', a moor-creature probably being a snake or a horse. Cf. *Móinsey*, now the Danish island of Møen.
- 130 Cf. *HH. II* 29.
- 131 Guðmundr and his men.
- 132 'Fast-Moving One' and 'One With a Rolling Gait', the names of two horses.
- 133 'Sun Homes'.
- 134 Or 'horse'. *Mist* 'Mist' is a valkyrie-name; her 'sea' or 'horse' is presumably either the air or the earth.
- 135 Hǫðbroddr.
- 136 Or perhaps 'They spoke severely to the king (Hǫðbroddr) of the coming (of Helgi)'.
- 137 A family name, originally at least, for members of the Burgundian royalty; a variant of *Niflungar* 'Nibelungs'.
- 138 This stanza is probably spoken by Guðmundr, as is the next.
- 139 I.e., the shore.
- 140 A kenning for 'ships'.
- 141 Oars smoothed by shaving.
- 142 Sogn fjord in Norway. VS 9 has *Sþk*.
- 143 Perhaps a reference to palisades, stake-fences forming a harbour. VS 9 has *fyrir Grindum* 'off Grindir', a supposed place-name.
- 144 Ships. Their colour suggests deadly purpose.
- 145 This stanza is spoken by Hǫðbroddr, as is the next.
- 146 'Spur Wolf' or 'Track Wolf', a horse.
- 147 'Sparinn's Heath'.
- 148 'One with a Mouth-Bit', a horse.
- 149 Perhaps 'One with a Halter' or 'Muzzled One', another horse.
- 150 'Murk Wood'.
- 151 Swords.
- 152 Sigrún's father.
- 153 'Ring', possibly Sigurðr Hringr, victor at the Battle of Brávellir.
- 154 Or 'battle'.
- 155 Heart.
- 156 Valkyries.
- 157 A kenning for 'battle'.
- 158 Helgi.

- 159 Valkyries.
- 160 ‘Horse of the troll-woman/giantess’ is a kenning for ‘wolf’ (cf. *Hdl.* 5). Huginn is one of Óðinn’s ravens. A raven’s ‘barley’ (i.e., food) is the flesh of dead warriors. In other words, ‘the wolf ate corpses’.
- 161 Literally, ‘hale’, ‘whole’.
- 162 This name often describes the god Freyr, especially in the title *Yngvi-Freyr*, but was also given to humans.
- 163 Presumably Hǫðbroddr.
- 164 An obscure reference.
- 165 Sigrún refers to herself in the third person. VS 9 records that Helgi and Sigrún married, as does *HH. II*.

Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar

Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar (*HHv.*) ‘The Lay of Helgi Hjörvarðsson’ survives on fol. 22r–24r of **R**. It is a patchwork of verse fragments, stitched together with passages of prose, none too smoothly. Its hero resembles Helgi Hundingsbani, protagonist of *HH. I* and *HH. II*, who was named after him and might well be his reincarnation, despite *HHv.*’s placement after *HH. I* in **R**.

The story told in *HHv.* is not referred to elsewhere in surviving literature, but was probably influenced by medieval German bridal-quest narratives. The poem does, however, have clear affinities with *HH. I* and *HH. II*. Notably, for example, the disputation between Atli and Helgi and the giantess Hrímerðr is an instance of a flyting, a type of verbal duel found in the other Helgi-poems and in *Hrbl.* and *Ls.* This instance attracts attention not just because of its metrical divergence from *HHv.*’s other verses—it uses *ljóðaháttir* and *galdralag*, as opposed to *fornyrðislag*—but also for its conclusion, in which the giantess is petrified by the first rays of the sun, rather as the dwarf Alvíss was overcome in *Alv.* This flyting may have been ‘conceived as a negative variation on [FSk.]’,¹ a poem with which it may share the underlying mythic theme of the overcoming of the moon (represented by Hrímerðr/Gerðr) by the diurnal sun (represented by Helgi, Atli and Freyr/Skírnir).²

HHv. also merits attention for its many colourful mythological details. These include talking birds, a shape-shifted earl, mounted valkyries, a peerless sword, and a troll-woman who uses a snake-bridle to ride a wolf.

Synopsis

Prose: A preface introduces a king called Hjörvarðr, three of his four wives, and their children, only one of whom, a son called Heðinn, appears again in *HHv.*

Hjörvarðr had vowed to marry the most beautiful woman, whom, he heard, was Sigrlinn, daughter of King Sváfnir. Hjörvarðr sent his earl, Atli, to ask for her hand in

1 J. Martínez-Pizarro, ‘Woman-to-Man Senna’, in T. Pàroli, ed., *Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages* (Spoleto: Presso la sede del Centro studi, 1990), pp. 339–50 at 346.

2 See also the note on the preceding killing by Helgi of the giant Hati in *HHv.* 11 pr., and the discussion in chapter 13 of E. Pettit, *The Wanting Sword: Conversion Imagery and Celestial Myth in ‘Beowulf’* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.11647/obp.0190>, which also draws parallels with *Beowulf*.

marriage on his behalf, but Fránmarr, Sigrlinn's foster-father, refused. Atli went home empty-handed.

We then learn that before Atli went to ask for Sigrlinn, he had listened and talked to a bird in a tree.

Verse: The poem begins with the bird expressing surprise that Hjörvarðr's women are deemed beautiful, and directing Atli's attention to Sigrlinn (1). Atli makes a deal with the bird: it can have what it wants from the king's court (with certain exceptions), if it will speak to him further. The bird, which is not heard of again, names its rewards, if Sigrlinn marries the king (2–4).

A brief prose passage then moves the action back to Atli's return from his mission. He reports its failure to Hjörvarðr (5).

Prose: Another prose passage records that Hjörvarðr ordered a second journey to win Sigrlinn, which he undertook along with Atli. They found Sváfnir's land in flames, but, after camping for the night, they crossed a river and came to a house. Upon it was a large bird, which was asleep. Atli shot it to death, and found Sigrlinn inside the house, along with Álóf, Fránmarr's daughter. Atli took both women with him. The bird, we learn, was Fránmarr in the form of an eagle. He had defended the women against an army—which had presumably set the land alight—using magic.

King Hróðmarr, Sigrlinn's suitor, is then introduced. He had killed Sváfnir, and it was he who had burnt the land.

Hjörvarðr married Sigrlinn, and Atli Álóf. Hjörvarðr and Sigrlinn had a son, who was unnamed and silent. One day, he was sitting on a burial mound when he saw valkyries riding by.

Verse: The noblest of the valkyries addresses him as 'Helgi' and urges him to speak (6). He asks what she will give him in addition to this name (7). She describes a marvellous sword (8–9).

Prose: A passage then identifies this valkyrie as Sváva, daughter of King Eylimi, and records that she protected Helgi in battles.

Verse: Next, Helgi accuses Hjörvarðr of being unwise to allow fire to burn the homes of people who had done him no harm (10). Hróðmarr, he prophesies, will rule their riches, their whole family having passed away (11).

Prose: Another prose passage records that Hjörvarðr said he would help Helgi, if he would avenge Sváfnir. Having fetched the marvellous sword, Helgi did so by killing Hróðmarr with Atli's assistance. They also killed a giant called Hati.

Verse: Hrimgerðr, Hati's daughter, and Atli, who was on watch, then exchange words of introduction (12–17), before trading accusations and boasts of a sexual nature (18–23). Hrimgerðr asks Helgi to sleep with her for one night in compensation for her father (24), to which Helgi replies that a shaggy giant would be more suitable for her (25). Hrimgerðr responds that Helgi would rather have the maiden who protected his men from her (26). Helgi asks to hear more about this maiden, in exchange for giving Hrimgerðr compensation (27), and Hrimgerðr describes her and her fellow valkyries

(28). Triumphanty, Helgi tells Hrímgerðr to look to the east—her conversation with him and Atli has kept her above ground until the rising of the sun, whose rays (we understand) turn her to stone (29–30).

Prose: Another prose passage describes how Helgi was betrothed to Sváva, a valkyrie (evidently the maiden whom Hrímgerðr had described). Helgi went off raiding, but his brother, Heðinn, stayed at home in Norway. On Yule Eve, Heðinn encountered a troll-woman, whose company he refused. She cursed him and that evening Heðinn swore to have Sváva, Helgi's beloved. Heðinn regretted this bitterly, however, and went south along wild paths until he met his brother.

Verse: Helgi asks Heðinn why he has been driven from the land alone and come to find him (31). Heðinn explains (32), and Helgi tells him not to reproach himself as he does not expect to survive an imminent duel (33). Heðinn urges him to kill his enemies (34).

Prose: Another prose passage explains that Helgi thought his fetches had visited Heðinn when he saw the troll-woman (an event that would signal Helgi's end). It adds that Helgi's foe, Álfr, son of Hróðmarr, had prepared the duelling-ground.

Verse: Helgi declares in a single stanza that the troll-woman knew Helgi would be killed (35).

Prose: A single line records the fight and that Helgi received a mortal wound.

Verse: Helgi then sends a man called Sigarr to bring to him Sváva (36–37), who asks what has become of him (38). Sigarr relates Helgi's fall and Álfr's victory (39). Helgi then greets Sváva (40) and tells her to prepare to love Heðinn (41). She protests that she had declared she would never love another (42). Heðinn commands her to kiss him and sets out to avenge Helgi (43).

Prose: A final line records the belief that Helgi and Sváva were born again.

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Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar

Frá Hjörvarði ok Sigrlinn

Hjörvarðr hét konungr. Hann átti fjórar konur. Ein hét Álfhildr; sonr þeira hét Heðinn. Qnnur hét Særeiðr; þeira sonr hét Humlungr. In þriðja hét Sinrjóð; þeira sonr hét Hymlingr.

Hjörvarðr konungr hafði þess heit strengt, at eiga þá konu er hann vissi vænsta. Hann spurði at Sváfnir konungr átti dóttur allra fegrsta; sú hét Sigrlinn. Iðmundr hét jarl hans. Atli var hans sonr, er fór at biðja Sigrlinnar til handa konungi. Hann dvalðisk vetrlangt með Sváfni konungi.

Fránmarr hét þar jarl, fóstri Sigrlinnar; dóttir hans hét Álöf. Jarlinn réð at meyjar var synjat, ok fór *Atli* heim.

Atli, jarls sonr, stóð einn dag við lund nøkkorn, en fugl sat í limunum uppi yfir honum ok hafði heyrtr til, at hans menn kólluðu vænstar konur þær er Hjörvarðr konungr átti. Fuglinn kvakaði, en Atli hlýddi hvat hann sagði.

Hann kvað:

1. ‘Sáttu Sigrlinn, Sváfnis dóttur,
meyna fegrstu í Munarheimi?
Þó hagligar Hjörvarðs konur
gumnum þíkkja at Glasislundi!’

Atli kvað:

2. ‘Mundu við Atla, Iðmundar son,
fugl fróðhugaðr, fleira mæla?’

Fuglinn kvað:

- ‘Mun ek, ef mik buðlungr blóta vildi,
ok kýs ek, þats ek vil, ór konungs garði!’

Atli kvað:

3. ‘Kjósattu Hjörvarð né hans sonu,
né inar fógru fylkis brúðir,
eigi brúðir, þær er buðlungr á!
Kaupum vel saman! Þat er vina kynni!’

Fuglinn kvað:

4. ‘Hof mun ek kjósa, hórga marga,
gullhyrndar kýr frá grams búi,
ef honum Sigrlinn sefr á armi
ok ónauðig jøfri fylgir.’

Þetta var áðr Atli fóri. En er hann kom heim ok konungr spurði hann tíðinda, hann kvað:

The Lay of Helgi Hjörvarðsson

About Hjörvarðr and Sigrlinn

There was a king called Hjörvarðr.¹ He had four wives. One was called Álfhildr;² their son was called Heðinn.³ The second was called Særeiðr;⁴ their son was called Humlungr.⁵ The third was called Sinrjóð,⁶ their son was called Hymlingr.⁷

King Hjörvarðr had vowed this solemnly, that he would possess the woman whom he knew to be the most beautiful.⁸ He learnt that King Sváfnir⁹ had the fairest daughter of all; she was called Sigrlinn.¹⁰ His¹¹ earl was called Iðmundr.¹² Atli¹³ was his son, who went to ask for Sigrlinn on the king's behalf. He stayed the whole winter with King Sváfnir.

There was an earl there called Fránmarr,¹⁴ Sigrlinn's foster-father; his daughter was called Álof.¹⁵ The earl decided that he was to be denied the maiden, and Atli went home.

Atli, the earl's son, stood one day in a certain grove, and a bird sat in the branches up above him and it had heard that his men called the women whom King Hjörvarðr had the most beautiful. The bird chirped, and Atli listened to what it said.

It said:

1. 'Have you seen Sigrlinn, Sváfnir's daughter,
the fairest of maidens in Munarheimr?¹⁶
Yet Hjörvarðr's wives
seem suitable to men in Glasislundr!'¹⁷

Atli said:

2. 'Would you speak further, wise-spirited bird
to Atli, Iðmundr's son?'

The bird said:

'I will, if Buðli's descendant¹⁸ would offer me sacrifice,
and I can choose that which I want from the king's court!'

Atli said:

3. 'Choose neither Hjörvarðr nor his sons,
nor the marshal's¹⁹ fair brides,
not the brides, those which Buðli's descendant²⁰ has!
Let's make a fine bargain together! That's the mark of friends!'

The bird said:

4. 'I'll choose temples, many outdoor sanctuaries,²¹
golden-horned cows from the king's farmstead,
if Sigrlinn sleeps in his arms
and accompanies the boar²² without compulsion.'

This was before Atli set out. And when he came back and the king asked him for tidings, he said:

5. 'Hófum erfiði ok ekki örindi;
 mara þraut óra á meginfjalli,
 urðum síðan Sæmorn vaða;
 þá var oss synjat Sváfnis dóttur,
 hringum gœddrar, er vér hafa vildum.'

Konungr bað at þeir skyldu fara annat sinn. Fór hann sjálfr. En er þeir kómu upp á fjall, ok sá á Svávaland landsbruna ok jóreyki stóra, reið konungr af fjallinu fram í landit ok tók náttból við á eina. Atli helt vørð ok fór yfir ána. Hann fann eitt hús. Fugl mikill sat á húsinu ok gætti ok var sofnaðr. Atli skaut spjóti fuglinn til bana, en í húsinu fann hann Sigrlinn, konungs dóttur, ok Álofu, jarls dóttur, ok hafði þær báðar braut með sér. Fránmarr jarl hafði hamask í arnar líki ok varit þær fyr hernum með fjölkynni.

Hróðmarr hét konungr, biðill Sigrlinnar. Hann drap Svávakonung ok hafði rænt ok brent landit.

Hjörvarðr konungr fekk Sigrlinnar, en Atli Álofar. Hjörvarðr ok Sigrlinn áttu son mikinn ok vænan. Hann var þogull. Ekki nafn festisk við hann. Hann sat á haugi. Hann sá riða valkyrjur níu, ok var ein gófugligust. Hon kvað:

6. 'Síð mundu, Helgi, hringum ráða,
 ríkr rógapaldr, né Røðulsvöllum —
 orn gól árla — ef þú æ þegir,
 þóttu harðan hug, hilmir, gjaldir!'
7. 'Hvat lætr þú fylgja "Helga" nafni,
 brúðr bjartlituð, allz þú bjóða ræðr?
 Hygg þú fyr qllum atkvæðum vel!
 Þigg ek eigi þat, nema ek þik hafa!'
8. 'Sverð veit ek liggja í Sigarshólmi,
 fjórum færa en fimm tøgu;
 eitt er þeira qllum betra,
 vígnesta bol, ok varit gulli.'
9. 'Hringr er í hjalti, hugr er í miðju,
 ógn er í oddi, þeim er eiga getr;
 liggr með eggju ormr dreyrfáðr,
 en á valþostu verpr naðr hala!'

Eylimi hét konungr. Dóttir hans var Sváva. Hon var valkyrja ok reið lopt ok lög. Hon gaf Helga nafn þetta ok hlifði honum opt síðan í orrostum.

- Helgi kvað:
10. 'Ertattu, Hjörvarðr, heilráðr konungr,
 fólks oddviti, þóttu frægr sér;
 léztu eld eta jofra byggðir,
 en þeir angr við þik ekki görðu.'

5. 'We have hardship and on no account our errand;
our horses became exhausted on a mighty mountain,
then we had to wade the Sæmorn,²³
then Sváfnir's daughter, endowed with rings,
was denied us, whom we wanted to have.'

The king ordered that they should go a second time. He himself went. And when they came up onto a mountain, and they²⁴ saw in Sváaland²⁵ burning land and great 'horse-smokes',²⁶ the king rode from the mountain forward into the land and made camp for the night by a river. Atli kept watch and went over the river. He found a house. A great bird was sitting on the house and kept watch and had fallen asleep. Atli shot the bird to death with a spear, and in the house he found Sigrlinn, the king's daughter, and Álf, the earl's daughter, and he took them both away with him. Earl Fránmarr had changed himself into the form of an eagle and defended the women against the army with magic.²⁷

There was a king called Hróðmarr,²⁸ Sigrlinn's suitor. He slew the king of Sváaland²⁹ and had pillaged and burnt the land.

King Hjörvarðr married Sigrlinn, and Atli Álf. Hjörvarðr and Sigrlinn had a son mighty and handsome.³⁰ He was silent. No name stuck to him. He sat on a burial mound. He saw nine valkyries riding, and one was the noblest.³¹ She said:

6. 'You'll be late, Helgi, to rule rings,
mighty strife-apple-tree,³² or Røðulsvellir³³ —
an eagle screamed early³⁴ — if you always keep silent,
even if, king, you prove your hard heart!'

7. 'What will you let accompany the name "Helgi",
bright-faced bride, since you have the authority to offer?
Think well before all decisions!
I won't accept it, unless I have you!'

8. 'I know of swords lying in Sigarshólmr,³⁵
four fewer than fifty;
one of them is better than all [others],
the bale of battle-brooches(?),³⁶ and adorned with gold.'

9. 'A ring is in the hilt, courage is in the middle,
terror is in the point,³⁷ for the one who gets to possess it;
along the edge lies a blood-stained snake,
and on the slaughter-cord(?)³⁸ an adder lashes its tail!'

There was a king called Eylimi. His daughter was Sváva.³⁹ She was a valkyrie and rode air and sea. She gave Helgi this name and protected him often thereafter in battles.

10. Helgi said:
'You're not, Hjörvarðr, a king of sound counsel,
army's point-wise one,⁴⁰ even if you are famous;
you let fire consume the settlements of boars,⁴¹
but they had done no harm to you.'⁴²

11. 'En Hróðmarr skal hringum ráða
þeim er áttu órir niðjar;
sá sésk fylkir fæst at lífi,
hyggsk aldaudra arfi at ráða!'

Hjörvarðr svaraði at hann myndi fá lið Helga, ef hann vill hefna móðurfóður síns. Þá sótti Helgi sverðit er Sváva vísaði honum til. Þá fór *hann*, ok Atli, ok feldu Hróðmar ok unnu morg þrekvirki. Hann drap Hata jötun, er hann sat á bergi nøkkoru. Helgi ok Atli lágu skipum í Hatafirði. Atli helt vorð inn fyrra *hlut* nætrinnar.

12. Hrimgerð, Hata dóttir, kvað:
‘Hverir ru holðar í Hatafirði?
Skjoldum er tjaldat á skipum yðrum;
frœknliga látið, fátt hygg ek yðr sjásk!
Kennið mér nafn konungs!’

Atli kvað:

13. 'Helgi hann heitir, en þú hvergi mátt
vinna grand gramí!
Járnborgir ru um qðlings flota —
knegut oss fálur fara!'

'Hvé þík heitir', kvað Hrímgerðr, 'halr inn ámátki?
Hvé þík kalla konir?
Fylkir þér trúur, er þík í fógrum lætr
beits stafni búa!'

15. 'Atli ek heiti, atall skal ek þér vera —
mjók em ek gífrum gramastr!
Úrgan stafn ek hefi opt búit
ok kvalðar kveldriður!

16. 'Hvé þú heitir, hála nágráðug?
Nefndu þinn, fála, foður!
Níu röstum er þú skyldir neðarr vera,
ok vaxi bér á baðmi barr!'

17. 'Hrímgerðr ek heiti, Hati hét minn faðir,
þann vissa ek ámátkastan jötun;
margar brúðir hann lét frá búi teknað,
unz hann Helgi hjó.'

18. 'Pú vart, hála, fyr hildings skipum
ok látt í fjarðar mynni fyrir;
ræsis rekka er þú vildir Rán gefa,
ef bér koemít í þverst þvari!

11. ‘And Hróðmarr shall rule rings,
 those which our kinsmen owned;
 that prince has least regard for his life,
 he intends to govern the inheritance of an entirely dead [family]!’

Hjörvarðr replied that he would get Helgi help, if he is willing to avenge his maternal grandfather.⁴³ Then Helgi fetched the sword which Sváva directed him to. Then he went, and Atli [with him], and they felled Hróðmarr and performed many mighty deeds. He slew the giant Hati,⁴⁴ when he was sitting on a certain rock. Helgi and Atli moored their ships in Hatafjørðr.⁴⁵ Atli kept watch for the first part of the night.

12. Hrímerðr,⁴⁶ Hati’s daughter, said:⁴⁷
‘Who are [these] heroes in Hatafjørðr?
 Your ships are hung with shields;
 you’re acting boldly, I suspect you’re not anxious about yourselves!
 Make known to me the king’s name!’

13. Atli said:
‘He’s called Helgi, and you can never
 cause harm to the king!⁴⁸
“Iron-strongholds”⁴⁹ are around the nobleman’s ships —
 troll-women cannot destroy us!’
14. ‘What are you named,’ said Hrímerðr, ‘hugely mighty hero?
 What do men call you?
 Your marshal trusts you, when he lets you
 stand⁵⁰ in the boat’s fair stem!’
15. ‘I’m called Atli, I shall be atrocious⁵¹ to you —
 I’m much the grimdest to giantesses!
 I’ve often stood in the damp stem
 and abused⁵² evening-riders!⁵³

16. ‘What are you called, corpse-greedy witch?
 Name your father, troll-woman!
 It’s further down⁵⁴ by nine leagues you should be,
 and may fir-trees⁵⁵ grow on your trunk!⁵⁶

17. ‘I’m called Hrímerðr, my father was called Hati,
 whom I knew to be the most immensely mighty giant;
 he had many brides taken from their dwelling,
 until Helgi hewed him down.’

18. ‘You, witch, were in front of the warlord’s ships
 and lay in wait in the fjord’s mouth;
 you wanted to give the prince’s warriors to Rán,⁵⁷
 if a sharp point didn’t pierce your whale-flesh!’⁵⁸

19. 'Duliðr ertu nú, Atli, draums kveð ek þér vera;
 síga lætr þú brýnn fyr brár;
 móðir mína lá fyr mildings skipum —
 ek drekþa Hlǫðvarðs sonum í hafi!
20. 'Gneggja myndir þú, Atli, ef þú geldr né værir —
 brettir sinn Hrimgerðr hala!
 Aptarla hjarta hygg ek at þitt, Atli, sé,
 þótt þú hafir hreina rødd!'
21. 'Hreini mun þér ek þikkja, ef þú reyna knátt
 ok stíga ek á land af legi!
 Qll muntu lemjak, ef mér er alhugat,
 ok sveigja þinn hala, Hrimgerðr!'
22. 'Atli, gakk þú á land, ef afli treystisk,
 ok hittumk í vík Varins!
 Rifja rétti er þú munt, rekkr, fá,
 ef þú mér í krymmur kómri!'
23. 'Munka ek ganga, áðr gumnar vakna
 ok halda of vísa vørð;
 era mér ørvænt, nær óru kómr
 skass upp undir skipi.'
24. 'Vaki þú, Helgi, ok böet við Hrimgerði,
 er þú lézt hoggvinn Hata!
 Eina nótta kná hon hjá joftri sofa,
 þá hefir hon bolva böetr!'
25. 'Loðinn heitir, er þik skal eiga — leið ertu mannkyni!
 Sá býr í Polleyju þurs,
 hundvíss jötunn, hraunbúa verstr;
 sá er þér makligr maðr!'
26. 'Hina vildu heldr, Helgi, er réð hafnir skoða
 fyrri nótta með firum;
 margullin mær mér þótti afli bera;
 hér sté hon land af legi
 ok festi svá yðarn flota;
 hon ein því veldr, er ek eigi mák
 buðlings mónum bana.'
27. 'Heyrðu nú, Hrimgerðr, ef ek böeti harma þér,
 segðu górr grami:
 var sú ein vætr, er barg qðlings skipum,
 eða fóru þær fleiri saman?'

19. 'You're deluded now, Atli, I say you're dreaming;
you're letting your eyebrows sink over your lashes;⁵⁹
my mother lay in wait for the munificent man's ships —
I drowned Hlǫðvarðr's⁶⁰ sons in the sea!
20. 'You'd neigh, Atli, if you weren't gelded —
Hrímgerðr's raising her tail!⁶¹
I think your heart's farther back,⁶² Atli,
even if you have the voice of a reindeer-stag!'
21. 'I'll seem a reindeer-stag to you, if you could try [me]
and [if] I stepped onto land from the sea!
You'll be all battered, if I put all my heart into it,
and lower your tail, Hrímgerðr!'
22. 'Atli, come ashore, if you trust your strength,
and let's meet in Varinn's bay!
It's a rightening⁶³ of the ribs you'll receive, warrior,
if you come into my clutches!'
23. 'I won't come until the men awake
and keep watch for the prince;
it would be no surprise to me should a witch
come up beneath our ship.'
24. 'Awake, Helgi, and pay compensation to Hrímgerðr,
since you had Hati hacked!⁶⁴
If for a single night she can sleep beside the boar,⁶⁵
then she'll have compensation for her sorrows!'
- 25.⁶⁶ 'He's called Loðinn,⁶⁷ [the one] who shall have
you — you're loathsome to mankind!
That giant lives on Polley,⁶⁸
an extremely wise ogre, the worst of lava-dwellers;
he's an appropriate man for you!'
26. 'You'd rather have that one, Helgi, who spied out havens
the other night among men;
the sea-golden⁶⁹ maiden seemed to me to have strength;
here she stepped ashore from the sea
and fastened⁷⁰ your fleet thus;
she alone brings it about that I cannot
slay the men of Buðli's descendant.'
27. 'Hear now, Hrímgerðr, if I compensate you for your sorrows,
speak to the warrior⁷¹ more fully:
was she a lone creature who protected the prince's ships,
or did more of them journey together?'

28. 'Prennar níundir meyja, þó reið ein fyrir,
 hvít und hjálmi mær;
 marir hristusk, stóð af mónum þeira
 dogg í djúpa dali,
 hagl í háva viðu;
 þaðan kóm r með óldom ár;
 allt var mér þat leitt er ek leitit!'

29. 'Austr líttu nú, Hrimgerðr, er þik lostna hefr
 Helgi helstofum!
 Á landi ok á vatni borgit er lofðungs flota
 ok siklings mónum it sama!'

30. 'Dagr er nú, Hrimgerðr, en þik dvalða hefir
 Atli til aldrlaga!
 Hafnar mark þykkir hlægligt vera,
 þars þú í steins líki stendr!'

Helgi konungr var allmikill hermaðr. Hann kom til Eylimra konungs ok bað Svávu, dóttur hans. Þau Helgi ok Sváva veittusk várar ok unnusk furðu mikit. Sváva var heima með feðr sínum, en Helgi í hernaði. Var Sváva valkyrja enn sem fyrr. Heðinn var heima með fóður sínum, Hjörvarði konungi, í Noregi.

Heðinn fór einn saman heim ór skógi jólaaptan ok fann trollkonu. Sú reið vargi ok hafði orma at taumum, ok bauð fylgð sína Heðni. 'Nei!', sagði hann. Hon sagði: 'Pess skaldu gjalda at bragarfulli!' Um kveldit óru heitstrengingar. Var fram leiddr sonargörltr. Lögðu menn þar á hendr sínar, ok strengðu menn þá heit at bragarfulli. Heðinn strengði heit til Svávu, Eylimra dóttur, unnustu Helga, bróður síns, ok iðraðisk svá mjök at hann gekk á braut villistígu suðr á lönd ok fann Helga, bróður sinn.

Helgi kvað:

31. 'Komðu heill, Heðinn! Hvæt kantu segja
 nýra spjalla ór Noregi?
 Hví er þér, stillir, stökkt ór landi
 ok ert einn kominn oss at finna?'

32. 'Mik hefir myklu glœpr meiri sóttan:
 ek hefi körna ina konungbornu,
 brúði þína, at bragarfulli!'

33. 'Sakask eigi þú! Sönn munu verða
 qlmál, Heðinn, okkur beggja:
 mér hefir stillir stefnt til eyrar,
 þriggja náttu skylak þar koma;
 if er mér á því, at ek aptr koma;
 þá má at góðu gørask slíkt, ef skal!'

28. 'Thrice nine maidens, yet one rode in front,
a maiden white under helm;
the horses shook themselves, from their manes came
dew in deep dales,
hail in high woods;
thence comes a good harvest among men;
all that I saw was hateful to me!'

29.⁷² 'Look east now, Hrímgerðr, since Helgi
has struck you with Hel-staves!⁷³
On land and on water the prince's fleet is protected
and the leader's men likewise!'

30. 'It's day now, Hrímgerðr, and Atli has delayed you
to your life's end!
A laughable harbour's [land]mark you'll seem to be,
there where you stand in the likeness of a stone!'

King Helgi was an almighty warrior. He came to King Eylimi and asked for Sváva, his daughter. Helgi and Sváva exchanged vows and loved each other very much. Sváva stayed at home with her father, but Helgi went raiding. Sváva was still a valkyrie, as before. Heðinn was at home with his father, King Hjörvarðr, in Nóregr.⁷⁴

Heðinn went home alone from a wood on Yule Eve and met a troll-woman. She rode a wolf and had snakes on the bridle, and she offered Heðinn her company. 'No!', he said. She said: 'You shall pay for this at the oath-cup!'⁷⁵ During the evening they swore oaths. A sacrificial boar⁷⁶ was brought forward. Men laid their hands on it there, and men then made solemn vows at the oath-cup. Heðinn made a solemn vow to [have] Sváva, Eylimi's daughter, beloved of Helgi, his brother, and he regretted it so much that he went away on wild paths south in the land and met Helgi, his brother.

Helgi said:

31. 'Welcome, Heðinn! What new tidings can you
tell of from Nóregr?
Why, prince, have you been driven from the land
and come alone to find us?'

32. 'A much greater misdeed has befallen me:
I have chosen the king-born one,
your bride, at the oath-cup!'

33. 'Don't blame yourself! The ale-talk of us both
will come true, Heðinn:
a prince has summoned me to an island,⁷⁷
in three nights I must come there;
I doubt that I shall come back;
such [an outcome] may then turn out for the good, if it must be!'

34. 'Sagðir þú, Helgi, at Heðinn væri
góðs verðr frá þér ok gjafa stórra;
þér er scemra sverð at rjóða
en frið gefa fjándum þínum.'

Þat kvað Helgi þvíat hann grunaði um feigð sína ok þat at fylgjur hans hófðu vitjat Heðins, þá er hann sa konuna ríða varginum.

Álfr hét konungr, sonr Hróðmars, er Helga hafði voll haslaðan á Sigarsvelli á þriggja nátta fresti.

- Pá kvað Helgi:
35. 'Reið á vargi er rekkvit var,
fljóð eitt er hann fylgju beiddi;
hon vissi þat at veginn myndi
Sigrlinnar sonr á Sigarsvöllum.'

Þar var orrosta mikil, ok fekk þar Helgi banasár.

36. Sendi Helgi Sigar at ríða
eptir Eylimi eingadóttur;
biðr brálliga búna verða,
ef hon vill finna fylki kvíkvan.

37. 'Mik hefir Helgi hingat sendan,
við þik, Sváva, sjálfa at mæla;
þik kvazk hilmir hitta vilja,
áðr ítrborinn ɔndu týndi.'

38. 'Hvat varð Helga, Hjörvarðs syni?
Mér er harðliga harma leitat!
Ef hann sær um lék eða sverð um beit,
þeim skal ek gumna grand um vinna!'

39. 'Fell hér í morgun at Frekasteini,
buðlungr, sa er var baztr und sólu;
Álfr mun sigri ɔllum ráða,
þótt þetta sinn þorfgi væri.'

40. 'Heil verðu, Sváva! Hug skaltu deila,
sjá mun í heimi hinztr fundr vera;
tjá buðlungi blœða undir —
mér hefir hjorr komit hjarta it næsta.

41. 'Bið ek þik, Sváva — brúðr, grátattu! —
ef þú vill mínu máli hlýða,
at þú Heðni hvílu gørvir
ok joðfur ungan ástum leiðir.'

34.⁷⁸

'You said, Helgi, that Heðinn was
worthy of good from you and great gifts;
it's more seemly for you to redder your sword
than to give peace to your opponents.'

Helgi said that because he suspected his doom and that his fetches had visited Heðinn when he saw the woman riding the wolf.⁷⁹

There was a king called Álfr, son of Hróðmarr, who, for Helgi, had marked a field with hazel poles⁸⁰ [for a duel] on Sigarsvellir⁸¹ before three nights had passed.

35.

Then Helgi said:
'She rode on a wolf when it had grown dark,
a woman who offered him⁸² escort;
she knew that Sigrlinn's son⁸³
would be slain at Sigarsvellir.'

There was a great fight, and Helgi received a mortal wound there.

36.

Helgi sent Sigarr⁸⁴ riding
after Eylimi's only daughter;⁸⁵
he bids her get ready swiftly,
if she wishes to find the marshal⁸⁶ alive.

37.

'Helgi has sent me here,
to speak with you yourself, Sváva;
the ruler said he wants to meet you,
before the nobly born one's⁸⁷ breath fails.⁸⁸

38.

'What has become of Helgi, Hjörvarðr's son?
Harshly it is that sorrows have sought me!
If sea deceived him or sword bit him,
I shall do harm to that one among men!'⁸⁹

39.

'He fell here⁹⁰ this morning at Frekasteinn,⁹¹
Buðli's descendant, the man who was best under the sun;
Álfr will achieve victory over all,
although this time ought not to be.'⁹²

40.⁹³

'Hail, Sváva! You must share your heart,⁹⁴
this will be our last meeting in the world;
blood begins to flow under Buðli's descendant —
a sword has come very near to my heart.

41.

'I bid you, Sváva — don't weep, bride! —
if you will hear my words,
that you prepare a bed for Heðinn
and turn your love towards the young boar.'⁹⁵

42. 'Mælt hafða ek þat í Munarheimi,
þá er mér Helgi hringa valði:
myndiga ek lostig at liðinn fylki
jófur ókunnan armi verja.'
43. 'Kystu mik, Sváva! Kem ek eigi áðr
Rögheims á vit né Røðulsfjalla,
áðr ek hefnt hefik Hjörvarðs sonar,
þess er buðlungr var beztr und sólu!'

Helgi ok Sváva er sagt at væri endrborin.

42.⁹⁶ 'I had said this in Munarheimr,⁹⁷
when Helgi gave me rings:
I would not willingly, after the marshal had passed away,
put my arms around an unknown boar.'⁹⁸

43.⁹⁹ 'Kiss me, Sváva! I shall not come
to visit Róghaimr¹⁰⁰ or Rǫðulsfjoll,¹⁰¹
before I have avenged Hjörvarðr's son,
the descendant of Buðli who was best under the sun!'

It is said that Helgi and Sváva were born again.¹⁰²

Textual Apparatus to *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*

Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar] This title is not in R; it is supplied editorially

Frá Hjörvarði ok Sigrlinn] A rubricated heading, but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this reading is therefore taken from the transcription therein

Hjörvarðr] The first letter is large, inset, rubricated but faded in R

Atli] R *iarliN*

hlýddi] R *lyddi*

Hann kvað] R also has *F. kv.* (short for *Fuglinn kvað* 'The bird said') in the margin

2 *Atli kvað*] Abbreviated *A. kv.* in margin of R

2 *Fuglinn kvað*] Abbreviated *F. kv.* in margin of R

3 *Atli kvað*] Abbreviated *A. kv.* in margin of R

3/1 *Hjörvarð*] R *hiorvajpr*

4 *Fuglinn kvað*] Abbreviated *F. kv.* in margin of R

5/1 *erfiði*] R *erfi*

5 pr. *hafði*] R *hafi*

11 pr. *hann*] R *ho(n)* 'she'

11 pr. *hlut*] R *lot*

21/1 *Hreini*] R *remi*

29/5 *lofðungs*] R *auplings* (the emendation provides alliteration)

33/6 *stefnt*] R *steyct*

36/6 *búna*] R *bvnir*

38/1 *Hvat varð*] R *Hvarþ*

41/4 *hlýða*] R *lyða*

42/5 *lostig*] R *lostic*

43/7 *var*] R absent

Notes to the Translation

- 1 A Norwegian king. His name means 'Sword Guardian'.
- 2 'Elf Battle'.
- 3 'Hairy One' or 'Fur/Skin Jacket'.
- 4 Possibly 'Sea Rider'.
- 5 'Humli's Descendant', Humli probably being a Hunnish king.
- 6 Perhaps 'Cinder Red'.
- 7 Again, 'Humli's Descendant'.

- 8 Or ‘most promising’.
- 9 Probably of Sváland (see the *HHv.* 5 pr.), which might originally have been the home of the Suevi tribe.
- 10 ‘Victory Linden’.
- 11 Hjörvarðr’s.
- 12 ‘Work/Deed Hand’.
- 13 ‘Terrible’.
- 14 ‘Sparkling Famous One’ or ‘Shining Horse/Sea’.
- 15 A female equivalent of the male *Óláfr*.
- 16 ‘Love’s Home/World’ or ‘Delight’s World’. The word might also be interpretable as a common noun meaning ‘beloved land’.
- 17 ‘Glasir’s Grove’. *SnESkáld* (I, 34, p. 41) records that a golden-leaved tree called *Glasir* ‘Gleaming One’ stands before Valhöll.
- 18 Atli.
- 19 Hjörvarðr’s.
- 20 Hjörvarðr.
- 21 The precise meaning of ON *hǫrgr* is uncertain.
- 22 When not denoting an actual boar, *jofurr* is, as here, a common metaphor for ‘warrior’ or ‘prince’, here Helgi.
- 23 Or *Sæmørn*, a river. *Sæ-* means ‘Sea’; *Morn/morn* is an attested term for a river.
- 24 Or ‘he’.
- 25 The land of the Suevi, an early Germanic group; now Swabia.
- 26 Clouds of dust created by galloping horses.
- 27 Fránmarr was presumably the bird which Atli killed.
- 28 ‘Fame Glorious One’ or ‘Fame Horse/Sea’.
- 29 Sváfnir.
- 30 Or ‘promising’.
- 31 We learn later that her name is Sváva.
- 32 I.e., warrior.
- 33 ‘Halo/Sun’s Fields’ or ‘Crest’s Fields’.
- 34 An auspicious sign for a warrior; cf. *HH. I* 1.
- 35 ‘Sigarr’s Island’.
- 36 Probably shields. Alternatively, ‘battle-fastenings’ (i.e., armour) or ‘battle-needles’ (i.e., swords).
- 37 If not purely conceptual, the references to courage and terror might refer to magical inscriptions in runes or other signs.
- 38 Perhaps the hilt-binding.
- 39 ‘Swabian (woman)’.
- 40 An honorific for a leader skilled with the points of weapons.
- 41 Warriors, princes.

- 42 Helgi reproaches his father for not avenging the burning of Sváfnir's land by Hróðmarr.
- 43 Sváfnir.
- 44 'Hater'; cf. Hati, the sun-hunting wolf of *Grm.* 39; they are not necessarily distinct characters.
- 45 'Hati's Fjord'.
- 46 'Frost Gerðr', a giantess. Cf. Gerðr in *FSk.*
- 47 The following flyting between Hrímgerðr and Atli is sometimes known as *Hrímgerðarmál* 'Hrímgerðr's Sayings'.
- 48 Helgi.
- 49 Presumably some form of armour-plating; perhaps shields with metal rims and bosses.
- 50 Literally 'lodge', 'inhabit'.
- 51 Atli puns on his name.
- 52 This might mean simply 'killed'.
- 53 Witches or troll-women.
- 54 I.e., underground.
- 55 Or 'a fir-tree'.
- 56 The Norse text contains a pun, as *baðmr* 'breast'—here translated 'trunk'—also means 'tree'. Cf. *Fsk.* 35.
- 57 I.e., to drown them. *Rán* 'Plunder' was the wife of the sea-giant Ægir.
- 58 Hrímgerðr is apparently described unflatteringly as a whale; some other Northern giantesses (such as Grendel's mother in *Beowulf*) are also identified or closely associated with whales or other monstrous sea-creatures. Alternatively, the sense might be 'if a sharp point did not entirely thwart you.'
- 59 An idiomatic description of a scowl or drowsiness, or both.
- 60 'Famous Guardian' or 'Troop Guardian'.
- 61 Hrímgerðr apparently likens herself to a mare, or another tailed animal, and reveals herself in a sexual provocation.
- 62 I.e., in your arse.
- 63 I.e., straightening and breaking.
- 64 Or simply 'since you hacked Hati'.
- 65 I.e., Helgi. In this stanza Hrímgerðr speaks of herself in the third person.
- 66 This stanza is probably spoken by Helgi.
- 67 'Shaggy'.
- 68 'Fir-Tree Island'.
- 69 Sunshine can make the sea shine like gold, and in Old Norse poetry gold is often said to reside in the sea. Emendation of *margullin* 'sea-golden' to *marggullin* 'much golden' (i.e., 'greatly adorned with gold') therefore seems unnecessary.
- 70 I.e., tethered.
- 71 Helgi refers to himself in the third person.
- 72 It is not entirely clear who is speaking here, but perhaps Atli recites this stanza and Helgi the next.

- 73 Or ‘deadly staves’. The rays of the dawning sun are imagined as deadly staves that turn Hrímgerð to stone. At the same time, the ‘staves’ are metaphorical runic letters, the words with which Helgi has delayed the giantess until sunrise; cf. *Alv.* 35, *Hdl.* 49(?). There might also be a link between these staves and the peerless sword which Helgi took from Sigarshólmr; it bore representations of snakes, creatures traditionally likened to staffs, and, as an unmatched weapon, it was potentially solar and rune-inscribed.
- 74 Norway.
- 75 A cup which was drunk from when oaths were sworn at a feast.
- 76 An actual boar.
- 77 I.e., for a duel. Helgi’s opponent is named shortly as Álfr, son of Hróðmarr, whom Helgi killed earlier.
- 78 The stanza seems to be spoken by Heðinn, who refers to himself in the third person.
- 79 A *fylgja* ‘fetch’ was a spirit thought to accompany someone in life (cf. *fylgja* ‘to accompany’). Helgi apparently has more than one such escort, and he thinks they have abandoned him for Heðinn. Hence it would seem appropriate to Helgi that his brother should have Sváva.
- 80 Cf. chapter 52 of *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*.
- 81 ‘Sigarr’s Plains’.
- 82 Heðinn.
- 83 Helgi.
- 84 Presumably the Sigarr of the aforementioned place-names Sigarshólmr and Sigarsvellir.
- 85 Sváva.
- 86 Helgi.
- 87 Helgi.
- 88 Literally ‘before the nobly born one lost breath’.
- 89 Literally, ‘to that one of men’.
- 90 The pair have apparently already arrived in the vicinity of Helgi’s death.
- 91 ‘Freki’s Stone’. See *HH. I* 44.
- 92 Literally, ‘is not necessary’.
- 93 Helgi speaks this stanza.
- 94 The meaning of *hug deila*, literally ‘to divide heart/mood/courage’, is disputed.
- 95 Heðinn.
- 96 Sváva speaks this stanza.
- 97 Or ‘in my beloved homeland’.
- 98 I.e., warrior, prince.
- 99 Heðinn speaks this stanza.
- 100 ‘Slander/Strife Home’.
- 101 ‘Halo’s/Sun’s Fells’.
- 102 Possibly as Helgi Hundingsbani, son of Sigmundr, and Sigrún, who appear in *HH. I* and *HH. II*. See the initial prose to *HH. II*.

Helgakviða Hundingsbana qnnur

Helgakviða Hundingsbana qnnur (*HH. II*) ‘The Second Lay of Helgi Hundingsbani’, on fol. 24r–26v of **R**, is the second of two compositions in this manuscript about the legendary hero Helgi Hundingsbani. They are separated by *HHv.*, about another Helgi—Helgi Hjörvarðsson, who gave his name to, and was possibly thought to have been reborn as, Helgi Hundingsbani.

HH. II is another *prosimetrum*—that is, a mixture of prose and poetry. Its verses are in *fornyrðislag*, except for one stanza of *ljóðaháttir* (23 [29]). The work gives an overall somewhat scrappy and secondary impression, due to certain groups of stanzas appearing out of their logical narrative order, the artlessness of the prose, and the explicit reliance on separate sources. Nevertheless, *HH. II* rewards attention by including many noteworthy details, scenes and themes. Among these are Helgi’s disguise, effectively as wolf in sheep’s clothing, in the court of his enemy, King Hundingr; Helgi’s treacherous killing by his brother-in-law, Dagr, with the spear of Óðinn; Dagr’s consequent cursing by his sister, Sigrún, Helgi’s valkyrie-wife; her eulogy of Helgi in terms of a young solar stag; Helgi’s joint rule with Óðinn in the afterlife; the dead Helgi’s ride to his burial-mound, and his meeting with the living Sigrún inside it; and the concluding revelation that Helgi and Sigrún were believed to have been reincarnated.

Three other Eddic poems are mentioned as sources for *HH. II*: the ancient *Völsungakviða* ‘Poem of the Völsungar’, which is lost; *Helgakviða* ‘Helgi’s Poem’, by which is apparently meant *HH. I*, a work which *HH. II* may partly paraphrase in prose and with which it displays obvious parallels, including a shorter version of the flying between Sinfjötli and Guðmundr; and *Káruljóð* ‘Kára’s Song’, also lost.

Synopsis

Prose: An opening passage introduces the poem’s hero, Helgi, as the son of Sigmundr and Borghildr. It describes strife between Sigmundr and Hundingr, king of Hundland, and how Helgi spied out Hundingr’s court.

Verse: Helgi boasts that Hundingr failed to spot him (1).

Prose: A prose passage records how Hundingr again tried to find Helgi, but that his men failed to see through his disguise as a milling slave-girl, despite prompting by a certain Blindr (possibly Óðinn) (2–3). Hundingr’s men apparently accepted the explanation of Helgi’s foster-father, Hagall, that the mighty slave-girl was a valkyrie whom Helgi had captured (4).

Another prose passage records Helgi's escape and killing of Hundingr. A valkyrie called Sigrún then rides to Helgi's ships and they converse.

Verse: Helgi tries to conceal his identity from Sigrún, but she finally reveals that she already knows it (5–13).

Prose: More prose introduces King Granmarr and his sons Höðbroddr, Guðmundr and Starkaðr. Höðbroddr is betrothed to Sigrún, but she immediately goes to Helgi, who has just killed the sons of Hundingr. She kisses Helgi and they converse.

Verse: Sigrún declares her love for Helgi, and explains that she has been promised to Höðbroddr but wants him instead (14–17). Helgi, who reciprocates her love, tells her not to worry (18).

Prose: The next prose section records Helgi's journey to Frekasteinn, accompanied by lightning and valkyries. Guðmundr, we learn, saw the advancing fleet and asked who led it, and Sinfjötli, Helgi's brother, replied. The two sides then fought and all of Granmarr's sons and chieftains fell, except Dagr, who swore oaths to the Völsungar. Sigrún found Höðbroddr dying.

Verse: Sigrún gloats that Höðbroddr won't have her now (19). Instead, she joyfully finds Helgi, who reveals, however, that he has killed her kin (20–22). He comforts her, and she laments her loss (23).

Verse: Abruptly, and out of chronological sequence, the scene then returns to Guðmundr (whose death has already been noted).¹ Four stanzas of flyting between him and Sinfjötli follow (an exchange also noted earlier) (24–27), and two in which Helgi says Sinfjötli would do better to fight than to insult, and that Granmarr's sons, though unimpressive, are not negligible (28–29).

Prose: Another prose passage records the marriage of Helgi and Sigrún. This is immediately followed by Helgi's death at the hands of Dagr, who slew him in a grove with the spear of Óðinn.

Verse: Dagr reluctantly tells Sigrún, his sister, of his killing of Helgi (30), whereupon she curses him (31–33). He tries to excuse himself by blaming Óðinn (34), and offers her compensation (35). She expresses her misery and laments Helgi (36–38).

Prose: A brief passage records the making of a burial-mound for Helgi, and his arrival in Valhöll, where Óðinn invites him to rule at his side.

Verse: Helgi immediately assigns Hundingr demeaning tasks (39).

Prose: The focus then shifts to a serving-woman of Sigrún, who sees Helgi riding to his burial-mound with a host of men.

Verse: She wonders if it is an illusion or a sign of Ragnarök, which Helgi denies (40–41). The serving-woman informs Sigrún (42), who enters the mound and elatedly

¹ This disorientating misplacement is probably due to a change of mind by the compiler of R, who composed at least some of the prose passages. He had initially decided not to quote the flyting between Guðmundr and Sinfjötli because he thought it was the same as that in HH. I (hence 'Sinfjötli, Sigmundr's son, answered, and that is also written [i.e., in HH. I]'); but subsequently he noticed significant differences and decided to include HH. II's version, unfortunately in the wrong place; see Harris, 'Eddic Poetry', pp. 215–18.

addresses her husband, but is aghast at his physical condition (43–44). Helgi notes her grief and expresses his delight at her coming (45–46). Sigrún makes his bed in the barrow, and falls asleep in his embrace (47–48). He, however, has to return to Valhöll before cock-crow (49).

Prose: Helgi and his men and the women return to their respective homes, but Sigrún has her serving-woman watch the grave-mound the following evening. Sigrún herself arrives at sunset.

Verse: Her serving-women (or Sigrún herself) declares that now that eagles and humans are sleeping, hopes that Helgi would return are fading (50). The serving-woman warns Sigrún not to enter the mound alone at night due to the nocturnal power of undead enemies (51).

Prose: A final passage records Sigrún's death from grief soon after. It also states that both she and Helgi were supposedly reborn, as Helgi Haddingjaskaði and Kára, daughter of Hálfdan, if only according to what is now considered an old wives' tale.

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Helgakviða Hundingsbana ɔnnur

Frá Völsungum

Sigmundr konungr, Völsungs sonr, átti Borghildi af Brálundi. Þau hétu son sinn Helga, ok eptir Helga Hjörvarðssyni. Helga fóstraði Hagall.

Hundingr hét ríkr konungr. Við hann er Hundland kent. Hann var hermaðr mikill ok átti marga sonu, þá er í hernaði váru.

Ófriðr ok dylgjur váru á milli þeira Hundings konungs ok Sigmundar konungs. Drápu hvárir annarra frændr. Sigmundr konungr ok hans ættmenn hétu Völsungar ok Ylfingar.

Helgi fór ok njósnaði til hirðar Hundings konungs á laun. Höemingr, sonr Hundings konungs, var heima. En er Helgi fór í brot, þá hitti hann hjarðarsvein ok kvað:

1. 'Segðu Höemingu at Helgi man,
hvern í brynu bragnar feldu;
ér úlf grán inni höfðuð,
þar er Hamal hugði Hundingr konungr!'

2. 'Hvøss eru augu í Hagals þýju —
era þat karls ætt er á kvernum stendr;
steinar rifna, stökkr lúðr fyrir!'

3. 'Nú hefir hørð dœmi hildingr þegit,
er vísi skal valbygg *mala*;
heldr er scemri hendi þeiri
meðalkaflí en móndultré!'

4. 'Pat er lítil vá, þótt lúðr þrumi,
er mær konungs móndul hrærir;
hon skævaði skýjum efri
ok vega þorði sem víkingar,
áðr hana Helgi hóptu gørði;
systir er hon þeira Sigars ok Hognar,
því hefir ótul augu Ylfinga man!'

Undan komsk Helgi ok fór á herskip. Hann feldi Hunding konung ok var síðan kallaðr Helgi Hundingsbani. Hann lá með her sinn í Brunavágum ok hafði þar strandhögg, ok átu þar hrátt.

Hogni hét konungr. Hans dóttir var Sigrún. Hon varð valkyrja ok reið lopt ok lög. Hon var svá endrborin. Sigrún reið at skipum Helga ok kvað:

The Second Lay of Helgi Hundingsbani

About the Völsungar

King Sigmundr, Völsungr's son, married Borghildr from Brálundr. They called their son Helgi, and [that was] after Helgi Hjörvarðsson.¹ Hagall² fostered Helgi.

There was a powerful king called Hundingr. Hundland is named after him. He was a great warrior and had many sons, who were raiding.

There was strife and hostility between King Hundingr and King Sigmundr. They slew each other's kinsmen. King Sigmundr and his relatives were called Völsungar and Ylfingar.

Helgi went and reconnoitred King Hundingr's court in secret. Höemingr, son of King Hundingr, was at home. And when Helgi went away, then he met a herd-boy and said:

1. 'Say to Höemingr that Helgi remembers
who, in a mail-coat, the men felled;³
you had a grey wolf in your house,
where King Hundingr thought of Hamall!'⁴

Hamall was the name of Hagall's son. King Hundingr sent men to Hagall to look for Helgi. And Helgi could save himself in no other way than by taking the clothes of a serving maid and going to mill. They searched and did not find Helgi. Then Blíndr the 'harm-wise'⁵ said:

2. 'Sharp are the eyes in Hagall's slave-girl —
it's not a churl's kin who stands at the quern;
the stones are riven, the stand breaks apart before [her]!
3. 'Now the ruler has received a harsh fate,
when the leader must mill foreign barley;
a sword-hilt⁶ is more seemly for that hand
than a mill-handle-tree!'

- Hagall answered and said:
4. 'It means little,⁷ even though the mill thunders,
when a king's maid turns the mill-handle;
she hurried along, higher than the clouds,
and dared to fight as vikings do,⁸
before Helgi held her captive;
she's the sister of Sigarr and Högni,⁹
which is why the Ylfingar's girl has terrible eyes!'

Helgi escaped and went to the warships. He felled King Hundingr and thereafter was called Helgi *Hundingsbani* 'Hundingr's Slayer'. He lay with his army in Brunavágur,¹⁰ and there on the shore slew cattle stolen on a raid,¹¹ and they ate them raw there.

There was a king called Högni. His daughter was Sigrún. She became¹² a valkyrie and rode sky and sea. She was reborn that way.¹³ Sigrún rode to Helgi's ships and said:

5. 'Hverir láta fljóta fley við bakka?
Hvar, hermegir, heima eiguð?
Hvers bíðið ér í Brunavágum?
Hvert lystir yðr leið at kanna?'
6. 'Hamall lætr fljóta fley við bakka,
eigum heima í Hléseyju;
bíðum byrjar í Brunavágum —
austr lystir oss leið at kanna!'
7. 'Hvar hefir þú, hilmir, hildi vakða
eða gogl alin Gunnar systra?
Hví er brynda þín blóði stokkin?
Hví skal und hjálum hrátt kjöt eta?'
8. 'Þat vann næst nýs niðr Ylfinga
fyr vestan ver, ef þik vita lystir,
er ek björnu tók í Bragalundi
ok ætt ara oddum saddak.'
9. 'Nú er sagt, mær, hvaðan sakar gørðusk;
því var á legi mér lítt steikt etit.'
10. 'Víg lýsir þú! Varð fyr Helga
Hundingr konungr hníga at velli;
bar sókn saman, er sefa hefnduð,
ok busti blóð á Brimis eggjar.'
11. 'Hvat vissir þú, at þeir sé,
snót svinnhuguð, er sefa hefndu?
Margir ru hvassir hildings synir
ok ámunir ossum niðjum.'
12. 'Varka ek fjarri, fólks oddviti,
gær á morgun, grams aldrloku;
þó tel ek slægjan Sigmundar bur,
er í valrúnum vígspjöll segir!'
13. 'Leit ek þik um sinn fyrr á langskipum,
þá er þú byggðir blóðga stafna
ok úrvalarunnir léku;
nú vill dyljask döglingr fyr mér,
en Högsna mær Helga kennir!'

Granmarr hét ríkr konungr er bjó at Svarinshaugi. Hann átti marga sonu: Hǫðbroddr, annarr Guðmundr, þriði Starkaðr. Hǫðbroddr var í konungastefnu. Hann fastnaði sér Sigrún, Högsna dóttur. En er hon spyrr þat, þá reið hon með valkyjur um lopt ok um lög at leita Helga.

5. 'Who lets ships float by the shore?
Where, warriors, do you have homes?
What are you waiting for in Brunavágur?
Where do you want to set a course?'
- 6.¹⁴ 'Hamall lets ships float by the shore,
we have homes on Hlésey;¹⁵
we're awaiting a fair wind in Brunavágur —
we want to set a course eastward!'
7. 'Where, ruler, have you awoken battle
or nourished the goslings of Gunnr's sisters?¹⁶
Why is your mail-coat besmirched with blood?
Why, beneath your helms, must you eat raw meat?'
8. 'Most recently, the kinsman of the Ylfingar¹⁷ fought anew
west of the sea, if you want to know,
when I captured bears¹⁸ in Bragalundr¹⁹
and sated the family of eagles with spear-points.²⁰
9. 'Now it's been said, maiden, whence strife came about;
that's why it was [that], by the sea, I had eaten meat scarcely roasted.'²¹
10. 'You're declaring a manslaughter!²² It was before Helgi
that King Hundingr sank down on the field;
a battle began in which you²³ avenged a kinsman,²⁴
and blood streamed along Brimir's edges.'²⁵
11. 'How do you know, wise-minded woman,
that they are [those] who avenged a kinsman?²⁶
There are many keen sons of a warrior
and similar to our kinsmen.'
12. 'I wasn't far, army's point-wise one,²⁷
yesterday morning, from the leader's²⁸ life's-end;
yet I reckon Sigmundr's son [to be] sly,
when he tells²⁹ war-stories in slaughter-runes!³⁰
13. 'I saw you once before on longships,
when you settled in the bloody stems
and the drizzle-cool waves sported;
now the descendant of Dagr³¹ wants to conceal himself before me,
but Högni's maiden recognizes Helgi!'

There was a powerful king called Granmarr who lived at Svarinshaugr.³² He had many sons: Hǫðbroddr, second Guðmundr, third Starkaðr.³³ Hǫðbroddr was at a meeting of kings. He betrothed himself to Sigrún, Högni's daughter. But when she heard that, she rode with valkyries through sky and over sea to look for Helgi.

Helgi var þá at Logafjöllum ok hafði barisk við Hundings sonu. Þar feldi hann þá Álf ok Eyjólf, Hjörvarð ok Hervarð, ok var hann allvígmóðr, ok sat undir Arasteini. Þar hitti Sigrún hann ok rann á háls honum ok kysti hann ok sagði honum erindi sitt, svá sem segir í 'Völsungakviðu inni fornu':

14. Sótti Sigrún sikling glaðan,
heim nam hon Helga hond at sökja;
kysti ok kvaddi konung und hjálmi,
þá varð hilmi hugr á vífi.
15. Fyrr létz hon unna af ǫllum hug
syni Sigmundar, en hon sét hafði.
16. 'Var ek Hǫðbroddi í her fóstnuð,
en jofur annan eiga vildak;
þó sjámk, fylkir, fröenda reiði;
hefi ek míns fóður munráð brotit!'
17. Nama Högna mær of hug mæla;
hafa kvazk hon Helga hylli skyldu.
18. 'Hirð eigi þú Högna reiði,
né illan hug ættar þinnar!
Þú skalt, mær ung, at mér lifa!
Ætt áttu, in góða, er ek eigi sjámk!'

Helgi samnaði þá miklum skipaher ok fór til Frekasteins, ok fengu í hafi ofviðri mannhætt. Þá kvómu leiptr yfir þá, ok stóðu geislar í skipin. Þeir sá í loptinu at valkyrjur níu riðu, ok kendu þeir Sigrúnu. Þá lægði storminn ok kvómu þeir heilir til lands.

Granmars synir sátu á bjargi nøkkoru er skipin sigldu at landi. Guðmundr hljóp á hest ok reið á njósn á bergit við höfnina. Þá hlóðu Völsungar seglum. Þá kvað Guðmundr, svá sem fyrr er ritat í 'Helgakviðu':

'Hverr er fylkir, sá er flota stýrir,
ok feiknalið færir at landi?'

Sinfjölti, Sigmundar sonr, svaraði, ok er þat enn ritat. Guðmundr reið heim með hersogu. Þá sœmnuðu Granmars synir her. Kómu þar margir konungar. Þar var Högni, faðir Sigrúnar, ok synir hans Bragi ok Dagr. Þar var orrosta mikil, ok fellu allir Granmars synir ok allir þeira hófðingjar, nema Dagr, Högna sonr, fekk grið ok vann eiða Völsungum. Sigrún gekk í valinn ok hitti Hǫðbrodd at kominn dauða. Hon kvað:

- 19 [25]. 'Muna þér Sigrún frá Sevafjöllum,
Hǫðbroddr konungr, hníga at armi!
Liðin er ævi — opt náir hrævi
gránstóð gríðar — Granmars sona!'

Helgi was then at Logafjöll³⁴ and had fought with Hundingr's sons. There he felled Álfr and Eyjólfur, Hjörvarðr³⁵ and Hervarðr,³⁶ and he was exhausted from battle, and he sat beneath Arasteinn.³⁷ There Sigrún met him and threw her arms round his neck and kissed him and told him her errand, just as it says in 'the ancient *Volsungakviða* ["Lay of the Volsungar"]':³⁸

14. Sigrún sought the glad prince,
 she sought Helgi's hand;
 she kissed and greeted the king beneath his helm,
 then the prince's³⁹ heart warmed to the woman.
15. She said she had loved Sigmundr's son
 with all her heart before she had seen him.
16. 'I was betrothed to Höðbroddr on a campaign,
 but I wanted to have another boar,'⁴⁰
 yet, marshal, I dread the wrath of kinsmen;
 I have broken my father's dearest wish!'
17. Högni's maid didn't speak contrary to her feelings;⁴¹
 she said she should have Helgi's favour.
18. 'Pay no heed to Högni's wrath,
 nor the ill feeling of your family!
 You must, young maiden, live with me!
 You have a family, good [lady], which I don't fear!'

Helgi then gathered a great fleet of ships and went to Frekasteinn, and heavy storms, dangerous to men, seized them in the sea. Then lightnings came over them, and rays of light shone into the ships. They⁴² saw in the sky that nine valkyries were riding, and they recognized Sigrún. Then the storm abated and they came safely to land.

Granmarr's sons were sitting on a certain cliff when the ships sailed to land. Guðmundr leapt on his horse and rode on reconnaissance to the cliff by the haven. Then the Volsungar lowered the sails. Then Guðmundr said, as is written earlier in *Helgakviða* 'Helgi's Poem':

'Who is the marshal who steers this fleet,
 and leads a fell force to land?'⁴³

Sinfjötli, Sigmundr's son, answered, and that is also written.⁴⁴ Guðmundr rode home with news of the army. Then Granmarr's sons mustered an army. Many kings came there. There was Högni, father of Sigrún, and his sons Bragi⁴⁵ and Dagr.⁴⁶ There was a great battle, and all of Granmarr's sons fell and all of their chieftains, except Dagr, Högni's son, accepted immunity and swore oaths to the Volsungar. Sigrún went among the slain and came upon Höðbroddr at the point of death. She said:

- 19 [25].⁴⁷ 'Sigrún from Sevafjöll⁴⁸ will not
 sink into your arms, King Höðbroddr!
 Spent is the life — the grey steeds of a giantess⁴⁹
 often get a corpse — of Granmarr's sons!'

Þá hitti hon Helga ok varð allfegin.

- Hann kvað:
- 20 [26]. 'Erat þér at ǫllu, alvitr, gefit,
 þó kveð ek nökkvi Nornir valda:
 fellu í morgun at Frekasteini
 Bragi ok Högni — varð ek bani þeira.
- 21 [27]. 'En at Styrkleifum Starkaðr konungr,
 en at Hlébjörgum Hrollaugs synir;
 þann sá ek gylfa grimmúðgastan,
 er barðisk bolr, var á brot hofuð!
- 22 [28]. 'Liggja at jörðu allra flestir
 niðjar þínir, at nám orðnir;
 vantattu vígi, var þér þat skapat
 at þú at rógi ríkmenni vart.'

Þá grét Sigrún.

- Hann kvað:
- 23 [29]. 'Huggastu, Sigrún! "Hildr" hefir þú oss verit;
 vinnat Skjoldungar skopum!'
 'Lifna mynda ek nú kjósa, er liðnir eru,
 ok knætta ek þér þó í faðmi felask!'
- 24 [19]. Þetta kvað Guðmundr, Granmars sonr:
 'Hverr er Skjoldungr, sá er skipum stýrir?
 Lætr gunnfana gullinn fyrir stafni;
 þíkkja mér friðr í farar broddi;
 verpr vígroða um víkinga.'
- Sinfjotli kvað:
- 25 [20]. 'Hér má Høðbroddr Helga kenna,
 flótta trauðan, í flota miðjum;
 hann hefir eðli ættar þinnar,
 arf Fjorsunga, und sik þrungit.'
- 26 [21]. 'Því fyrr skulu at Frekasteini
 sáttir saman um sakar dœma;
 mál er, Høðbroddr, hefnd at vinna,
 ef vér lægra hlut lengi bárum!'

Then she came upon Helgi and was overjoyed.

He said:

20 [26]. ‘You’ve not been given entirely good luck, alien creature,
yet I declare that the Nornir caused this, in part:
 there fell this morning at Frekasteinn
 Bragi and Högni — I was their slayer.

21 [27]. ‘And at Styrkleifar,⁵⁰ King Starkaðr [fell],
and at Hlébjörg,⁵¹ Hrollaugr’s sons;⁵²
 I saw that most grim-minded ruler,
when his trunk fought — his head was gone!⁵³

22 [28]. ‘There lie on the earth almost all
of your kinsmen, turned into corpses;
you couldn’t prevent the battle, for you it was decreed
 that you were the source of strife for powerful men.’

Then Sigrún wept.

He said:

23 [29]. ‘Comfort yourself, Sigrún! You have been a “Hildr”⁵⁴ to us;
Skjoldungar⁵⁵ cannot escape fate!’
‘Now I would choose that those should live, who have passed away,
 and I could yet conceal myself in your embrace!’

24 [19]. Guðmundr, Granmarr’s son, said this:⁵⁶
‘Who is the Skjoldungr, the one who steers the ships?
 He lets a golden battle-standard [fly] before the stem;
it doesn’t seem to me that peace is at the forefront of your voyage;
 a battle-redness is cast over the vikings.’⁵⁷

Sinfjötli said:

25 [20]. ‘Here Höðbroddr can recognize Helgi,
averse to flight, in the middle of the fleet;
 he has subjugated to himself
your family’s homeland, the inheritance of the Fjorsungar.’⁵⁸

26 [21]. ‘Before that [comes about], at Frekasteinn
they⁵⁹ shall be reconciled through discussion of the dispute;⁶⁰
 it’s time, Höðbroddr, to take vengeance,
if we bear the lower part for long!’⁶¹

- 27 [22]. 'Fyrr mundu, Guðmundr, geitr um halda,
 ok bergskorar brattar klífa,
 hafa þér í hendi heslikylfu —
 þat er þér blíðara en Brimis dómar!'
- 28 [23]. 'Pér er, Sinfjötli, sœmra myklu
 gunni at heyja ok glaða ǫrnu,
 en ónýtum orðum at deila,
 þótt hildingar heiptir deili!'
- 29 [24]. 'Þikkit mér góðir Granmars synir,
 þó dugir siklingum satt at mæla:
 þeir merkt hafa á Móinsheimum
 at hug hafa hjórum at bregða;
 eru hildingar hølzti snjallir!'
- Helgi fekk Sigrúnar ok áttu þau sonu; var Helgi eigi gamall. Dagr, Högna sonr, blótaði Óðin til fôðurhefnnda. Óðinn léði Dag geirs síns. Dagr fann Helga, mág sinn, þar sem heitir at Fjoturlundi. Hann lagði í gögnum Helga með geirnum. Þar fell Helgi. En Dagr reið til fjalla ok sagði Sigrúnu tíðindi:
30. 'Trauð em ek, systir, trega þér at segja,
 þvíat ek hefi nauðigr nipti grætta:
 fell í morgun und Fjoturlundi
 buðlungr, sá er var beztr í heimi
 ok hildingum á hálsi stóð.'
31. 'Þik skyli allir eiðar bíta,
 þeir er Helga hafðir unna,
 at inu ljósa Leiptrar vatni
 ok at úrvöllum Unnar steini!'
32. 'Skríðiat þat skip, er und þér skríði,
 þótt óskabyrr eptir leggisk!
 Rennia sá marr, er und þér renni,
 þóttu fjándr þína forðask eigir!'
33. 'Bítia þér þat sverð, er þú bregðir,
 nema sjálfum þér syngvi um höfði!
 Þá væri þér hefnt Helga dauða,
 ef þú værir vargr á viðum úti,
 auðs andvani ok alls gamans,
 hefðir eigi mat, nema á hræum spryngir!'

- 27 [22]. ‘Before that, Guðmundr, you’d tend goats,
and scale steep rock-gorges,
have in your hand a hazel stick —
that’s pleasanter for you than Brimir’s judgements!’⁶²
- 28 [23].⁶³ ‘For you, Sinfjötli, it’s much more seemly
to wage war and to gladden eagles
than to deal in useless words,
even if the warriors deal in hatreds!’⁶⁴
- 29 [24]. ‘Granmarr’s sons don’t seem good to me,
yet it befits princes to speak truly:
they’ve made it clear at Móinsheimar,
that they have the spirit to wield swords,⁶⁵
the warriors are far too brave!'
- Helgi married Sigrún and they had sons; Helgi was not old. Dagr, Högni’s son, sacrificed to Óðinn to avenge his father. Óðinn lent Dagr his spear. Dagr found Helgi, his brother-in-law, at the place called Fjoturlundr.⁶⁶ He ran Helgi through with the spear.⁶⁷ There Helgi fell.⁶⁸ And Dagr rode to the fell and told Sigrún the news:
30. ‘I am loath, sister, to tell you of sorrows,
as, against my will, I have to make my kinswoman weep:
there fell this morning beneath Fjoturlundr
a descendant of Buðli, the one who was best in the world
and [who] stood on the necks of warriors.’
31. ‘All the oaths shall bite you,
those which you had sworn to Helgi,
by the lustrous water of Leiptr⁶⁹
and by the drizzle-cool stone of Unnr!⁷⁰
32. ‘May the ship not glide, which glides beneath you,
even if a fair wind lies behind it!
May the steed not run, which runs beneath you,
even if you have to escape your enemies!
33. ‘May the sword not bite for you, which you brandish,
unless it sing above your own head!
Then Helgi’s death would be avenged on you,
if you were a wolf⁷¹ out in the woods,
devoid of wealth and of all pleasure,
[if you] had no food, unless you burst [from feeding] on corpses!'

Dagr kvað:

34. Dagr kvað:
 'Œr ertu, systir, ok ørvita,
 er þú brœðr þínum biðr forskapa!
 Einn veldr Óðinn ɔllu bølví,
 þvíat með sifjungum sakrúnar bar!
35. 'Þér býðr bróðir bauga rauða,
 qlí Vandilsvé ok Vígðali;
 hafðu hálfan heim harms at gjoldum,
 brúðr baugvarið, ok burir þínir!'
36. 'Sitka ek svá sael at Sevafjöllum,
 ár né um nætr, at ek una lífi,
 nema at liði lofðungs ljóma bregði,
 renni und vísa Vígbær þinig,
 gullbitli vanr, knega ek grami fagna!'
37. 'Svá hafði Helgi hrædda górv
 fjándr sína alla ok frændr peira,
 sem fyr úlfí óðar rynni
 geitr af fjalli, geiska fullar!'
38. 'Svá bar Helgi af hildingum
 sem ítrskapaðr askr af þyrni,
 eða sá dýrkálfr, döggu slunginn,
 er øfri ferr ɔllum dýrum,
 ok horn glóa við himin sjálfan!'

Haugr var gjorr eptir Helga. En er hann kom til Valhallar, þá bauð Óðinn honum ɔllu at ráða með sér.

Helgi kvað:

39. Þú skalt, Hundingr, hverjum manni
 fótlaug geta ok funa kynda,
 hunda binda, hesta gæta,
 gefa svínum soð, áðr sofa gangir!'

Ambótt Sigrúnar gekk um aptan hjá haugi Helga, ok sá at Helgi reið til haugsins með marga menn.

Ambótt kvað:

40. 'Hvárt eru þat svik ein, er ek sjá þíkkjumk,
 eða ragna rök — ríða menn dauðir,
 er jóa yðra oddum keyrið —
 eða er hildingum heimfør gefin?'

Dagr said:

34. ‘You’re mad, sister, and out of your mind,⁷²
when you invoke an evil fate for your brother!
Óðinn alone is the cause of all the misfortune,
for he bore strife-runes among relatives!
35. ‘Your brother⁷³ offers you red rings,
all Vandilsvé⁷⁴ and Vígðalir,⁷⁵
have half our homeland in compensation for the harm,
ring-adorned bride, [you] and your boys!’
36. ‘I shan’t sit so happily in Sevafjöll,
[neither] early nor during the nights, that I shall enjoy life,
unless light should shine on the host of the laudable one,
[and] there should run here, beneath the ruler, Vígblær,⁷⁶
used to a golden bit, [and] I can greet the prince!
37. ‘So fully had Helgi frightened
all his foes and their kinsmen,
as before a wolf nanny-goats run frenzied
from a fell, full of fright!
38. ‘So Helgi surpassed [other] warriors,
as nobly shaped ash [surpasses] thorn,
or the deer-calf, drenched in dew,
which walks superior to all [other] beasts,⁷⁷
and whose horns glow against heaven itself!⁷⁸

A burial-mound was prepared for Helgi. And when he came to Valhöll,⁷⁹ then Óðinn invited him to rule over all with him.

Helgi said:

39. ‘You, Hundingr, shall for every man
get a foot-bath and kindle a fire,
tether the hounds, attend to the horses,
give slops to the swine, before going to sleep!’

Sigrún’s serving-woman was walking during the evening by Helgi’s burial-mound, and she saw that Helgi rode to the mound with many men.

The serving-woman said:

40. ‘Is it an illusion, that which I seem to see,
or the doom of the powers⁸⁰ — dead people riding,
as your steeds are spurred by points⁸¹ —
or has a homeward-journey been granted to the warriors?’

41. 'Era þat svik ein, er þú sjá þíkkisk,
né aldar rof, þóttu oss lítir,
þótt vér jói óra oddum keyrim —
né er hildingum heimför gefin.'

Heim gekk ambótt ok sagði Sigrúnu:

42. 'Út gakk þú, Sigrún frá Sevafjöllum,
ef þík fólks jaðar finna lystir!
Upp er haugr lokinn, kominn er Helgi!
Dólgspor dreyra, döglingr bað þík,
at þú sárdropa svefja skyldir!'

Sigrún gekk í hauginn til Helga ok kvað:

43. 'Nú em ek svá fegin fundi okkrum
sem átfrekir Óðins haukar,
er val vitu, varmar bráðir,
eða dögglitir dagsbrún sjá!'

44. 'Fyrr vil ek kyssa konung ólifðan,
en þú blóðugri brynu kastir!
Hár er þitt, Helgi, hélu þrungit,
allr er vísi valdøgg sleginn,
hendr úrsvalar Högna mág!
Hvé skal ek þér, buðlungr, þess bót of vinna?"

45. 'Ein veldr þú, Sigrún frá Sevafjöllum,
er Helgi er harmdøgg sleginn!
Grætr þú, gullvarið, grimmum tárum,
sólbjört, suðrœn, áðr þú sofa gangir,
hvert fellr blóðugt á brjóst grami,
úrsvalt, innfjálgt, ekka þprungit!'

46. 'Vel skulum drekka dýrar veigar,
þótt mist hafim munar ok landa!
Skal engi maðr angrljóð kveða,
þótt mér á brjósti benjar líti!
Nú eru brúðir byrgðar í haugi,
lofða dísir, hjá oss liðnum!"

Sigrún bjó sæing í hauginum.

47. 'Hér hefi ek þér, Helgi, hvílu górvu,
angrlausa mjók, Ylfinga niðr;
vil ek þér í faðmi, fylkir, sofna,
sem ek lofðungi lifnum myndak!"

41.⁸²

'It's no illusion, that which you seem to see,
nor the age's destruction, even though you observe us,
even though we spur our steeds with points —
nor has a homeward journey been granted to the warriors.'

The serving-woman went and said to Sigrún:

42.

'Go outside, Sigrún from Seafjöll,
if you wish to meet the troop's protector!⁸³
The mound has opened up, Helgi has come!
His battle-traces⁸⁴ bleed, the descendant of Dagr⁸⁵ asked that you
should staunch⁸⁶ his wound-drops!'⁸⁷

Sigrún went into the mound to Helgi and said:

43.

'Now I'm as elated at our meeting
as Óðinn's ravenous hawks,⁸⁸
when they perceive the slain, warm pieces of meat,
or, dew-glistening, they see daybreak!⁸⁹

44.

'I want to kiss the unliving king,
before you cast off your bloody mail-coat!
Your hair, Helgi, is covered with hoar-frost,
the prince is all drenched in slaughter-dew,⁹⁰
drizzle-cool are the hands of Högri's son-in-law!
How, descendant of Buðli, shall I make you a remedy for this?'

45.⁹¹

'You alone, Sigrún from Seafjöll, are the reason
why Helgi is drenched in harm-dew!⁹²
You, gold-adorned, weep grim tears,
sun-bright, southern [lady], before you go to sleep;
each falls bloody on the leader's breast,⁹³
drizzle-cool, searing, swollen with grief!

46.

'Well shall we drink costly liquors,
even though we've lost love and lands!
No one shall recite a grief-song,
even if one beholds mortal wounds on my breast!
Now brides are buried in the grave-mound,
the women of praiseworthy ones, passed away beside us!'

Sigrún prepared a bed in the burial-mound.

47.

'Here, Helgi, I have made a bed for you,
very carefree, kinsman of the Ylfingar;
I want to fall asleep, marshal, in your embrace,
as I would with the living leader!'

48.

'Nú kveð ek enskis ørvænt vera,
 síð né snimma, at Sevafjöllum,
 er þú á armi ólifðum sefr,
 hvít, í haugi, Högna dóttir,
 ok ertu kvík, in konungborna!

49.

'Mál er mér at ríða roðnar brautir,
 láta fólvan jó flugstíg troða;
 skal ek fyr vestan vindhjálms brúar,
 áðr Salgofnir sigrþjóð veki!'

Þeir Helgi riðu leið sína, en þær fóru heim til bojar. Annan aptan létt Sigrún ambótt halda vørð á hauginum. En at dagsetri, er Sigrún kom til haugsins, hon kvað:

50.

'Kominn væri nú, ef koma hygði,
 Sigmundar burr frá solumn Öðins;
 kveð ek grams þinig grænask vánir,
 er á asklimum ernir sitja
 ok drífr drótt qlí draumpinga til.

51.

'Verðu eigi svá cer, at ein farir,
 dís Skjoldunga, draughúsa til!
 Verða qflgarí allir á nótum
 dauðir dólgar, mær, en um daga ljósa!'

Sigrún varð skammlíf af harmi ok trega. Þat var trúá í forneskju at menn væri endrborinir, en þat er nú kölluð kerlingavilla. Helgi ok Sigrún er kallat at væri endrborin. Hét hann þá Helgi Haddingjaskaði, en hon Kára Hálfdanar dóttir, svá sem kveðit er í 'Káruljóðum', ok var hon valkyrja.

48. 'Now I declare nothing to be unexpected,
late or early, at Sevafjöll,
since you sleep on my unliving arm,
white, in the mound, Högni's daughter,
and you're alive, king-born one!'

49. 'It's time to ride reddened ways,
to let my fallow steed tread the flight-path;⁹⁴
I must be west of wind-helm's bridges,⁹⁵
before Salgofnir⁹⁶ wakens the victory-people!'⁹⁷

Helgi and his men rode on their way, and the women went home to the farmstead. The following evening, Sigrún had the serving-woman keep watch at the burial-mound. And at sunset, when Sigrún came to the mound, she said:

50.⁹⁸ 'He'd have come by now, if he intended to come,
Sigmundr's son from the halls of Óðinn;
I declare that hopes of the fierce one⁹⁹ [coming] here are fading,
when eagles sit on ash-branches¹⁰⁰
and the whole warrior-host¹⁰¹ drifts to dream-assemblies.¹⁰²

51.¹⁰³ 'Don't be so insane that you go alone,
woman of the Skjöldungar, to revenant-houses!¹⁰⁴
All dead enemies become mightier at night,¹⁰⁵
lady, than during bright days!'

Sigrún was short-lived due to sorrow and anguish. It was a belief in olden times that people were reborn, but that it now called an old wives' tale. It is declared that Helgi and Sigrún were reborn.¹⁰⁶ He was then called Helgi Haddingjaskaði,¹⁰⁷ and she Kára Hálfdan's daughter,¹⁰⁸ as is related in *Káruljóð* 'Kára's Song,'¹⁰⁹ and she was a valkyrie.

Textual Apparatus to *Helgakviða Hundingsbana ɔnnur*

Helgakviða Hundingsbana ɔnnur] This title is not in R; it is supplied editorially

Frá Völsungum] A rubricated heading, but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this reading therefore relies on the transcription therein

Sigmundr] The first letter is large and rubricated, but faded

hjarðarsvein] R *hiarþar*

3/4 *mala*] R absent

hrátt] R *rát*

varð valkyrja] R *var / þvalkyria*

7/4 *Gunnar*] R *gvNa*

11/4 *hefndu*] R *hefndob*

13/10 *Helga*] R absent

18/8 *eigi*] R absent

18 prose *er*] R absent

19/6 *hrævi*] R *hreifi*

22/1 *jorðu*] R *iordán*

24/5 *friðr*] R *friþ*

25/5 *hefir*] R *hefi*

26/5 *er*] R *ec*

28/6 *orðum at deila*] R abbreviates *o. a. d.*

29/1–4] R abbreviates *gran. s. þo. d. s. s. a. m.*

29/5–6 *hafa á Móinsheimum*] R abbreviates *h. a. m. r.*

31/5 *inu*] R *eíno*

36/3 *nætr*] R *rætr*

37/1 *Helgi*] R absent

39/7 *gefa*] R *ge* inserted in the outer margin; the rest of the word is lacking

43/3 *átfrekir*] R *át frekr*

45/9 *fellr*] R *felt*

51/5 *øflgari*] R *aufflgan*

51/7 *dólgar, mær*] R *dólgmer*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 He may actually have been Helgi Hjörvarðsson reborn.
- 2 'Hail'.
- 3 The armoured man they killed was probably Helgi's father, Sigmundr; cf. *Sf.*
- 4 The 'grey wolf' is evidently Helgi, one of the *Ylfingar* 'Wolfings/Descendants of a Wolf'. He probably pretended to be, or was otherwise protected by, his foster brother, *Hamall* 'Wether', for whom he was apparently mistaken by *Hundingr* 'Descendant of a Hound'. Helgi, it seems, was effectively a wolf in sheep's clothing, one soon pursued, in a sense, by a hound.
- 5 Possibly Óðinn in disguise. *Blindr* means 'Blind/Hidden One'.
- 6 More precisely, the part of a sword between the pommel and the guard.
- 7 Literally, 'It is little woe'.
- 8 I.e., she was a valkyrie.
- 9 Presumably Sigrún's father, mentioned below.
- 10 *Bruna-* could be the genitive of *bruni* 'burning, heat, fire', or of a personal name, *Bruni*. *Vágár* means 'waves' or 'bays'.
- 11 Literally, 'and he had there a strand-hewing'.
- 12 Or 'was', if *var* is preferred to *vard*.
- 13 Paper manuscripts have *Sváva* for *svá*, in which case the sentence means 'She was Sváva reborn'. Cf. the concluding prose to *HHv*.
- 14 Helgi speaks this stanza.
- 15 'Hlér's Island', *Hlér* 'Sea' being an alias of the sea-giant Ægir; now *Læsø* in the Kattegat.
- 16 *Gunnr* 'Battle' is the name of a valkyrie; her sisters are valkyries; their 'goslings' are ravens, which feed on the corpses of slain warriors.
- 17 Helgi refers to himself.
- 18 Either a literal reference to bears or, perhaps, to berserks or warriors in general.
- 19 A place-name. *Braga* could relate to *bragr* 'best' or be the genitive of *Bragi*, name of the god of poetry; *lundr* means 'grove'.
- 20 Or, more generally, 'weapon-points'.
- 21 I.e., the meat was raw.
- 22 As required under Icelandic law; by contrast, undeclared, secret killings were punishable as murders.
- 23 Helgi and his men.
- 24 Or 'kinsmen'.
- 25 *Brimir* is here the name of, or a term for, a sword; cf. *HH*. II 27, *Grm.* 44, *Sd.* 14.
- 26 Or 'kinsmen'.
- 27 An honorific for a leader skilled with the points of weapons, here Helgi.
- 28 *Hundingr*'s.
- 29 Or 'who tells'.
- 30 I.e., although he has had to question her, she still rates him a man sly enough to conceal his real name and whose bloody actions speak louder than any tales of war.

- 31 Or simply ‘now the prince’, but cf. *HH. I*, 7.
- 32 ‘Svarinn’s (Burial-)Mound’.
- 33 ‘Strong Battle(r)’.
- 34 ‘Mountains of Flame(s)’.
- 35 ‘Sword Warder’.
- 36 ‘Army Warder’.
- 37 ‘Stone of Eagle(s)’.
- 38 A lost poem, although *HH. I*, entitled *Völsungakviða* in R, has an equivalent scene.
- 39 Helgi’s.
- 40 When not denoting an actual boar, *jofurr* is, as here, a common metaphor for ‘warrior’, ‘prince’.
- 41 I.e., she spoke her mind.
- 42 The sailors.
- 43 *HH. I* 32, though the quotation is not verbatim.
- 44 I.e., in *HH. I* 33–44. Awkwardly, a version of Sinfjötli’s verbal exchange with Guðmundr also forms *HH. II* 24–27.
- 45 ‘Best’ (probably; cf. *bragr* ‘best’, ‘poetry’).
- 46 ‘Day’.
- 47 Here and in subsequent stanzas of *HH. II*, the first number denotes the stanza’s position in R, the second, bracketed number the logical order of stanzas according to the sequence of events.
- 48 ‘Sea Mountains’, ‘Mountains of Kinsman/Kinsmen’ or ‘Mountains of Spirits/Affection(s)’.
- 49 Wolves.
- 50 ‘Tumult Cliffs’.
- 51 ‘Lee/Shelter Mountains’ or ‘Lee Help’.
- 52 Hrollaugr and his sons are obscure.
- 53 If this passage refers to King Starkaðr, he apparently shared more than his name with a more famous legendary warrior, about whose life and death much is recorded in medieval Scandinavian texts; see especially events concerning Starcatherus in *GD* (8.8.12), in which, at the last, his decapitated trunk almost crushes his killer.
- 54 ‘Battle’, the name of a valkyrie.
- 55 ‘Shieldings’, here probably in the general sense ‘warriors’.
- 56 The following six stanzas focussed on the flyting between Guðmundr and Sinfjötli appear misplaced; this verbal exchange is mentioned earlier, in the prose following st. 18.
- 57 Possibly a reference to a redness in the sky, or to the battle-standard. If the latter, one might translate literally: ‘it casts battle-redness over the vikings’.
- 58 *Fjorsungar* may be the name of Höðbroddr’s tribe. Alternatively, *arf fjorsunga* ‘the inheritance of weever fish’, is possibly a kenning for gold, which was thought to reside in the sea; perhaps weever fish were thought to protect gold with their poisonous spines when buried in mud and sand.
- 59 Helgi and Höðbroddr.

- 60 I.e., agreement will arise through the death of one or other in battle; Guðmundr is being ironic.
- 61 I.e., 'if we draw (and have to keep) the short straw for long'.
- 62 Goat-tending was considered no task for a warrior.
- 63 Helgi speaks this stanza.
- 64 Cf. *HH. I* 45.
- 65 Cf. *HH. I* 46.
- 66 'Fetter Grove'.
- 67 Dagr thereby breaks his vow of allegiance to the Volsungar.
- 68 The first-century Roman historian Tacitus describes, in chapter 39 of his *Germania*, how the Semnones, a people of the Suebi, prohibited anyone from entering a sacred wood 'unless bound by a fetter' (*nisi vinculo ligatus*). The wood was the site of human sacrifice, doubtless to the supreme god who lived there. None who stumbled or collapsed there were permitted to get to their feet within the wood, but had to roll themselves out of it. Helgi's killing at 'Fetter Grove' with Óðinn's spear may distantly recall such a practice.
- 69 'Lightning', a river; cf. *Grm.* 28.
- 70 'Wave', probably another river or a spring. *Uðr* (gen. *Unnar*) is also the name of a daughter of the sea-giant, Ægir.
- 71 Or 'outlaw'.
- 72 Cf. *Ls.* 21, 29; *Od.* 15 [11].
- 73 Dagr refers to himself.
- 74 'Vandill's Sanctuary'. Perhaps now Vendsyssel, Denmark.
- 75 'Battle Dales'.
- 76 'Battle Breeze', Helgi's horse.
- 77 Or 'deer'.
- 78 Probably an instance of the mythological concept of a solar hart.
- 79 'Hall of the Slain', Óðinn's hall.
- 80 Ragnarok, the Norse apocalypse.
- 81 The points of spurs.
- 82 This stanza is presumably spoken by Helgi.
- 83 Helgi.
- 84 Wounds, the marks left by battle.
- 85 Not Helgi's killer.
- 86 Literally, 'put to sleep'.
- 87 The blood dripping from his wounds.
- 88 Ravens.
- 89 Literally 'day's brow', i.e., the light of dawn seen over the horizon.
- 90 Blood.
- 91 The dead Helgi speaks.
- 92 Blood.

- 93 Helgi refers to himself.
- 94 Air or sky.
- 95 ‘Wind-helm’ is a poetic term for the vault of heaven. Its ‘bridges’ are perhaps rainbows.
- 96 A cockerel. *Sal-* means ‘Hall’, but *-gofnir* is obscure.
- 97 The warriors of Valholl. Cf. *Vsp.* 42.
- 98 It is uncertain whether Sigrún or the serving-woman speaks this stanza. This edition tentatively attributes both this stanza and the next to the latter.
- 99 Helgi.
- 100 I.e., to roost. Yggdrasill, the world-tree, was an ash.
- 101 Men or humans in general.
- 102 I.e., goes to bed, falls asleep.
- 103 This stanza is presumably spoken by the serving-woman.
- 104 Burial-mounds.
- 105 Literally, ‘in the nights’.
- 106 Cf. *Sg.* 45.
- 107 ‘Scathe/Harm of the Haddingjar’, who seem to have been legendary brothers. They appear in a variety of early sources, but remain rather obscure; cf. *Gðr. II* 22.
- 108 Kára may mean ‘(One with) Curls’ or ‘(One) of the Wind’; *Hálfdan* means ‘Half-Dane’.
- 109 This poem is lost, but it was a source for the late medieval Icelandic poems called *Griplur*, which in turn inspired the seventeenth-century *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar* ‘Saga of Hrómundr Gripsson’. This saga features a certain *Helgi inn frækni* ‘Helgi the Brave’ who is protected by the magic of his flying swan-mistress *Lára* (cf. Kára), until he accidentally kills her by severing her leg.

Frá dauða Sinfjötla

Frá dauða Sinfjötla (*Sf.*) ‘About Sinfjötli’s Death’ is a purely prose passage in **R** (fol. 26v–27r). It serves as a bridge between the preceding three Helgi-poems and the following poems about Sigurðr, half-brother of Helgi Hundingsbani.

Sf. relates events described more fully in chapters 10 to 13 of *VS*. Similarities of wording indicate a close relationship between the two accounts.

Synopsis

Sf. begins by introducing three sons of Sigmundr: Sinfjötli, Helgi and Hámundr (the first two featured in *HH. I* and *HH. II*). Sinfjötli slew the brother of his stepmother, Borghildr, over their love of the same woman. For that, Borghildr wanted Sinfjötli exiled, but she had to accept compensation from Sigmundr instead.

At her brother’s funeral feast, however, she served Sinfjötli poisoned drink three times. The first two times, Sigmundr, who was reputedly wholly immune to poison, drank it for Sinfjötli. The third time Sigmundr told his son to strain the drink through his moustache. Sinfjötli drank it and died immediately.

Sigmundr carried Sinfjötli’s body to a fjord, where an old boatman (Óðinn incognito) offered him passage. Sigmundr put the body in the boat, which was then fully laden. The old man told Sigmundr he would have to walk along the shore, and then vanished.

Sigmundr stayed in Borghildr’s kingdom in Danmørk (Denmark) for a long time, before moving to his kingdom in Frakkland (Francia). Then he married Hjordís, daughter of King Eylimi, and they had a son called Sigurðr (the hero of subsequent poems in **R**). Sigmundr died at the hands of King Hundingr’s sons. Hjordís married Álfr, son of King Hjálprekr, at whose (probably Danish) court Sigurðr grew up.

Sigurðr proved to be the greatest man of all.

Further Reading

Fleck, J., ‘Konr—Óttarr—Geirrøðr: A Knowledge Criterion for Succession to the Germanic Sacred Kingship’, *SS* 42 (1970), 39–49.

Von See, K., B. La Farge, W. Gerhold, E. Picard and K. Schulz, *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, Bd. 5: *Heldenlieder* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2006).

Frá dauða Sinfjótha

Sigmundr, Völsungs sonr, var konungr á Frakklandi. Sinfjóthi var elztr hans sona, annarr Helgi, þriði Hámundr. Borghildr, kona Sigmundar, átti bróður er hét . . . En Sinfjóthi, stjúpsonr hennar, ok . . . báðu einnar konu báðir, ok fyrir þá sök drap Sinfjóthi hann. En er hann kom heim, þá bað Borghildr hann fara á brot, en Sigmundr bauð henni fébætr, ok þat varð hon at þiggja. En at erfinu bar Borghildr ql. Hon tók eitr, mikit horn fullt, ok bar Sinfjóthla. En er hann sá í hornit, skilði hann at eitr var í, ok mælti til Sigmundar: 'Gjörótr er drykkinn, ái.' Sigmundr tók hornit ok drakk af. Svá er sagt at Sigmundr var harðgørr at hvárki mátti honum eitr granda utan né innan. En allir synir hans stóðusk eitr á hörund utan. Borghildr bar annat horn Sinfjóthla, ok bað drekka, ok fór allt sem fyrr. Ok enn it þriðja sinn bar hon honum hornit, ok þó ámælisorð með, ef hann drykki eigi af. Hann mælti enn sem fyrr við Sigmund. Hann sagði: 'Láttu grón sía þá, sonr!' Sinfjóthi drakk ok varð þegar dauðr.

Sigmundr bar hann langar leiðir í fangi sér ok kom at firði einum mjóvum ok longum, ok var þar skip eitt lítit ok maðr einn á. Hann bauð Sigmundi far of fjørðinn. En er Sigmundr bar líkit út á skipit, þá var bátrinn hlaðinn. Karlinn mælti at Sigmundr skyldi fara fyrir innan fjarðinn. Karl hratt út skipinu ok hvarf þegar.

Sigmundr konungr dvalðisk lengi í Danmörk í ríki Borghildar, síðan er hann fekk hennar. Fór Sigmundr þá suðr í Frakkland, til þess ríkis er hann átti þar. Þá fekk hann Hjordísar, dóttur Eylimu konungs. Þeira sonr var Sigurðr. Sigmundr konungr fell í orrostu fyrir Hundings sonum. En Hjordís giptisk þá Álfí, syni Hjálpreks konungs. Óx Sigurðr þar upp í barnæsku.

Sigmundr ok allir synir hans váru langt um fram alla menn aðra um afl ok vóxt ok hug ok alla atgervi. Sigurðr var þá allra framarstr, ok hann kalla allir menn í fornfrœðum um alla menn fram ok gófgastan herkonunga.

About Sinfjotli's Death

Sigmundr, Volsungr's son, was king in Frakkland.¹ Sinfjotli was the eldest of his sons, second was Helgi,² third Hámundr.³ Borghildr, Sigmundr's wife, had a brother who was called . . .⁴ And Sinfjotli, her stepson, and . . .⁵ they both asked to marry the one woman, and for that reason Sinfjotli slew him. And when he⁶ came home, Borghildr asked him to go away, but Sigmundr offered her compensation, and she had to accept that. But at the funeral feast, Borghildr served ale. She took poison, a great hornful, and brought it to Sinfjotli. And when he looked in the horn, he perceived that poison was in it, and he said to Sigmundr: 'The drink is cloudy, father.'⁷ Sigmundr took the horn and drained it. It is said that Sigmundr was so strongly made that poison could never hurt him outside or inside. But all his sons withstood poison [only] outside on their skin. Borghildr brought another horn to Sinfjotli, and asked him to drink, and everything went as before. And, again, the third time she brought him the horn, but with insulting words with it, if he did not drain it. He spoke again as before with Sigmundr. He⁸ said: 'Let your moustache strain it then, son!' Sinfjotli drank and died at once.

Sigmundr carried him a long way in his arms and came to a fjord slender and long, and there was a little ship and a lone man in it. He offered Sigmundr passage over the fjord. But when Sigmundr brought the body out to the ship, then the boat was [fully] laden. The old man said to Sigmundr that he would have to go along the shore inside the fjord. The old man pushed the ship out and vanished at once.⁹

King Sigmundr stayed a long time in Danmørk¹⁰ in the kingdom of Borghildr, after he married her. Then Sigmundr went south into Frakkland, to the kingdom that he owned there. Then he married Hjordís,¹¹ daughter of King Eylimi. Their son was Sigurðr.¹² King Sigmundr fell in battle before¹³ Hundingr's sons. And Hjordís then gave herself in marriage to Álfr,¹⁴ son of King Hjálprekr.¹⁵ Sigurðr grew up there in his childhood.

Sigmundr and all his sons were far above all other men in strength and stature and courage and all accomplishments. Sigurðr was foremost of all then, and in the ancient traditions all people call him superior to all men and the noblest of army-kings.

Textual Apparatus to *Frá dauða Sinfjötla*

Frá dauða Sinfjötla] This heading is rubricated but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; the reading is therefore reliant on the transcription therein. Later, paper manuscripts have the title *Sinfjötlalok* 'Sinfjötli's End'.

Sigmundr] The first letter is large, inset and rubricated, but faded, in R

Hámundr] R *hamundir* (with a macron for -un-)

er hét . . .] R has a black space here

ok . . .] R has a blank space here

innan] R *iN*

pó] R *þa*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 Francia, kingdom of the Franks.
- 2 Helgi Hundingsbani, hero of *HH. I* and *HH. II*.
- 3 'High Hand/Protection'.
- 4 The name is missing. This man is also unnamed in the account of these events in VS 10.
- 5 The name of Helgi's love-rival is probably missing. VS 10 records that it was a king, Borghildr's (unnamed) brother, who vied with Sinfjötli for a beautiful woman.
- 6 Sinfjötli.
- 7 Elsewhere, *ái* means 'great-grandfather'.
- 8 Sigmundr.
- 9 The old boatman was Óðinn in disguise (cf. *Hrbl.*). Óðinn was sometimes a psychopomp for the best fallen warriors, whom he took to Valhöll. This episode may reflect a tradition about the divisive waters of death (cf. the River Styx in Greek mythology), across which Sigmundr could not be ferried while alive.
- 10 Denmark.
- 11 'Sword Lady'.
- 12 'Victory Guardian'.
- 13 I.e., at the hands of.
- 14 'Elf' or 'Noble Wolf'.
- 15 'Help-Powerful One'. VS 12 identifies him as a Danish king.

Grípisspá

Grípisspá (*Grp.*) ‘The Prophecy of Grípir’ survives in **R** (fol. 27r–28v). It is a pedestrian work in *fornyrðislag*, but it serves a useful purpose as a synoptic preface to subsequent poems in **R** concerning the hero Sigurðr. It reminds the audience—most or all of whom were probably familiar with some stories about Sigurðr—of what is to come. It was probably composed in the thirteenth century.

Chapter 16 of *VS*, another major Old Norse source for Sigurðr’s life, also mentions his visit to his maternal uncle, Grípir, and the latter’s prophecy. In contrast to the sequence of events indicated by the order of poems in **R**, however, the saga has Sigurðr meet his foster-father, Reginn, before hearing Grípir’s prophecy.

As a *spá* ‘prophecy’, *Grp.* merits comparison with *Vsp.* and *Hdl.* 29–44.

Synopsis

Prose: An introductory passage records that Sigurðr arrived at the hall of his maturnal uncle, Grípir, who was the wisest of men and prescient. He met a man called Geitir outside and they conversed.

Verse: Sigurðr learns from Geitir that Grípir lives there (1), and asks to speak with him (2). Sigurðr identifies himself (3), and Geitir informs Grípir that a visitor wishes to meet him (4). Grípir welcomes Sigurðr (5), who asks him how his life will turn out (6). Grípir informs him that he will be the greatest man (7).

In response to further questions from Sigurðr, Grípir informs him that he will avenge his grandfather, Eylimi (8–9); slay Reginn (his foster-father) and Reginn’s brother Fáfnir (10–11); take Fáfnir’s treasure (12–13); waken an armoured woman (Brynhildr) on a mountain (14–16), who will teach him runes (17); and arrive at the home of Heimir, Brynhildr’s foster-father (18–19).

Sigurðr then persuades a reluctant Grípir to continue, even if the future he sees is unpleasant (20–26). Grípir tells him of Brynhildr (27).

In response to further prompting from Sigurðr, Grípir tells him that he will fall deeply in love with Brynhildr (28–29); betroth himself to her, and she to him (30–31); fall victim to the treacheries of Grím(h)ildr (mother of Gunnarr, Högni and Guðrún) (32–33); ask for Brynhildr on Gunnarr’s behalf (34–35); swear oaths with Gunnarr and Högni, and exchange appearances with the former (36–37); disguised as Gunnarr, betroth himself to Brynhildr (38–39); sleep beside her, albeit without sexual contact

(40–41); celebrate his wedding (to Guðrún), along with Gunnarr's (to Brynhildr) (42); give Guðrún a good marriage, though Brynhildr will feel deeply aggrieved and use trickery to avenge herself (43–45); be accused of oath-breaking by Brynhildr (46–47); be harmed by Brynhildr (48–49); be killed by Guðrún's brothers (50–51); be the worthiest man ever born (52).

Sigurðr and Grípir then part on good terms (53).

Further Reading

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Grípisspá

Grípir hét sonr Eylimi, bróðir Hjordísar. Hann réð löndum ok var allra manna vitrastr ok framvíss. Sigurðr reið einn saman ok kom til hallar Grípis. Sigurðr var auðkendr. Hann hitti mann at máli úti fyrir höllinni. Sá nefndisk Geitir. Þá kvaddi Sigurðr hann máls ok spyrr:

1. ‘Hverr byggir hér borgir þessar?
Hvat þann þjóðkonung þegnar nefna?’
‘Grípir heitir gumna stjóri,
sá er fastri ræðr foldu ok þegnum.’
2. ‘Er horskr konungr heima í landi?
Mun sá gramr við mik ganga at mæla?
Máls er þarfi maðr ókunnigr,
vil ek fljótliga finna Grípi!’
3. ‘Þess mun glaðr konungr Geiti spyrja:
hverr sá maðr sé er máls kveðr Grípi.
‘Sigurðr ek heiti, borinn Sigmundi,
en Hjordís er hilmis móðir.’
4. Þá gekk Geitir Grípi at segja:
‘Hér er maðr úti, ókuðr, kominn;
hann er ítarligr at áliti;
sá vill, fylkir, fund þinn hafa.’
5. Gengr ór skála skatna dróttinn
ok heilsar vel hilmi komnum:
‘Þiggðu hér, Sigurðr! Væri scemra fyrr!
En þú, Geitir, tak við Grana sjálfum!’
6. Mæla námu ok mart hjala,
þá er ráðspakir rekkar fundusk:
‘Segðu mér, ef þú veizt, móðurbróðir,
hvé mun Sigurði snúna ævi?’
7. ‘Þú munt maðr vera mæztr und sólu,
ok hæstr borinn hverjum jofri,
gjöfull af gulli, en glöggr flugar,
ítr áliti ok í orðum spakr!’
8. ‘Segðu, gegn konungr, gerr en ek spyrja,
snotr, Sigurði, ef þú sjá þíkkisk:
hvat mun fyrst görask til farnaðar,
þá er ór garði emk genginn þínum?’

The Prophecy of Grípir

Grípir,¹ brother of Hjordís,² was the name of a son of Eylimi. He ruled lands and was the wisest of all men and prescient. Sigurðr rode alone and came to the hall of Grípir. Sigurðr was easily recognized. He met a man to speak to outside the hall. He³ named himself Geitir.⁴ Then Sigurðr asked to speak with him and enquired:

1. ‘Who inhabits these strongholds here?
What do thanes call the people-king?’
‘The steerer of men is called Grípir,
he who rules firm ground and thanes.’
2. ‘Is the wise king at home in the land?
Will the leader come to talk with me?
An unknown man is in need of speech,
I want to meet Grípir at once!’
3. ‘The glad king will ask Geitir this:
who the man is who asks to speak with Grípir.’
‘I am called Sigurðr, born to Sigmundr,
and Hjordís is the ruler’s⁵ mother.’
4. Then Geitir went to speak to Grípir:
‘An unknown man has arrived outside here;
he is lordly in appearance;
he wants, marshal, to meet you.’
5. The lord of warriors walks from the dwelling
and greets well the [newly] arrived ruler;
‘Accept [our hospitality] here, Sigurðr! Sooner would
have been better!
And you, Geitir, take care of Grani himself!’⁶
6. They began to speak and to chat at length,
when the counsel-wise men met each other:
‘Tell me, if you know, maternal uncle,⁷
how will life turn out for Sigurðr?’
7. ‘You will be the most glorious man under the sun,
and the highest born of any boar,⁸
generous with gold, but stingy of flight,
stately in appearance and wise in words!’
8. ‘Tell Sigurðr, just [and] wise king,
more fully than I may ask, if you think you see:
what will happen first to my advantage,
when I am gone from your court?’

9. 'Fyrst muntu, fylkir, fóður um hefna
ok Eylimá alls harms reka;
þú munt harða Hundings sonu,
snjalla, fella — mundu sigr hafa!'
10. 'Segðu, ítr konungr, ættingi, mér,
heldr horskliga, er vit hugat mælum:
sérðu Sigurðar snor brögð fyrir,
þau er hæst fara und himinskautum?'
11. 'Mundu einn vega orm inn frána,
þann er gráðugr liggr á Gnitaheiði;
þú munt báðum at bana verða,
Regin ok Fáfni — rétt segir Grípir!'
12. 'Auðr mun oerinn, ef ek eflik svá
víg með virðum, sem þú víst segir;
leið at huga ok lengi seg:
hvat mun enn vera ævi minnar?'
13. 'Þú munt finna Fáfnis bæli
ok upp taka auð inn fagra,
gulli hlœða á Grana bógu;
ríðr þú til Gjúka, gramr vígrisinn.'
14. 'ENN skaltu hilmi í hugaðsrœðu,
framlyndr jofur, fleira segja;
gestr em ek Gjúka, ok ek geng þaðan:
hvat mun enn vera ævi minnar?'
15. 'Sefr á fjalli fylkis dóttir,
björt í brynu, eptir bana Helga;
þú munt hoggva hvøssu sverði,
brynu rísta með bana Fáfnis.'
16. 'Brotin er brynja, brúðr mæla tekri,
er vaknaði víf ór svefni;
hvat mun snót at heldr við Sigurð mæla,
þat er at farnaði fylki verði?'
17. 'Hon mun ríkjum þér rúnar kenna,
allar þær er aldir eignask vildu,
ok á manns tungu mæla hverja,
lif með lækning — lifðu heill, konungr!'

9. ‘First, marshal, you will avenge your father
and entirely avenge Eylimi’s harm;⁹
you will fell the hard, bold sons of Hundingr —
you will have victory!'¹⁰
10. ‘Tell me, noble king [and] kinsman,
rather wisely, since we’re speaking agreeably:
do you foresee Sigurðr’s strong, swift deeds,
those that will journey highest under heaven’s corners?’¹¹
11. ‘You will alone slay the shining snake,
the one which lies greedy on Gnitheiðr;¹²
you will become the killer of both,
Reginn¹³ and Fáfnir¹⁴ — Grípir speaks rightly!’¹⁵
12. ‘Wealth will be abundant, if I accomplish
such a killing among men, as you say with certainty;
put your mind to it and speak at length:¹⁶
what more will be in my life?’
13. ‘You will find Fáfnir’s lair
and take up the fair treasures,
load gold on Grani’s shoulders;¹⁷
you will ride to Gjúki’s,¹⁸ battle-proud prince.’¹⁹
14. ‘Still you must in confidential speech,
high-minded boar,²⁰ say more to the ruler;
I’m a guest of Gjúki, and I go from there:
what more will be in my life?’
15. ‘A marshal’s daughter²¹ sleeps on a mountain,
bright in a mail-coat, after Helgi’s death;²²
you will strike with a sharp sword,
cut the mail-coat with Fáfnir’s bane.’²³
16. ‘Broken is the mail-coat, the bride starts to speak,
when the wife²⁴ awoke from her sleep;
what will the woman say rather [soon] to Sigurðr
that will be to the marshal’s benefit?’
17. ‘She will teach you, powerful one, runes,²⁵
all those that people want to possess,
and to talk in every human tongue,
[and] medicines with healing art — live healthily, king!’

18. 'Nú er því lokit, numin eru frœði,
ok em braut þaðan búinn at riða;
leið at huga ok lengra seg:
hvat mun meirr vera minnar ævi?'
19. 'Þú munt hitta Heimis byggðir
ok glaðr vera gestr þjóðkonungs;
farit er, Sigurðr, þats ek fyrir vissak;
skala fremr enn svá fregna Grípi!'
20. 'Nú fær mér ekka orð þatstu mæltir,
þvíat þú fram um sér, fylkir, lengra;
veiztu ofmikit angr Sigurði —
því þú, Grípir, þat gerra segja!'
21. 'Lá mér um œsku ævi þinnar
ljósast fyrir líta eptir;
rétt emka ek ráðspakr taliðr,
né in heldr framvíss — farit þats ek vissak!'
22. 'Mann veit ek engi fyr mold ofan,
þann er fleira sé fram en þú, Grípir;
skalattu leyna, þótt ljótt sé,
eða mein górisk á mínum hag!'
23. 'Era með lóstum lögð ævi þér —
láttu, inn ítri, þat, qðlingr, nemask!
Þvíat uppi mun, meðan qld lifir,
naddéls boði, nafn þitt vera!'
24. 'Verst hyggjum því, verðr at skiljask
Sigurðr við fylki at sógoru;
leið vísaðú — lagt er allt fyrir —
mœrr, mér, ef þú vilt, móðurbróðir!'
25. 'Nú skal Sigurði segja gerva,
allz þengill mik til þess neyðir;
mundu víst vita at vætki lýgr:
dœgr eitt er þér dauði ætlaðr.'
26. 'Vilkat ek reiði ríks þjóðkonungs,
góðráðs, at heldr, Grípis, þiggja;
nú vill víst vita, þótt viltki sé,
hvat á sýnt Sigurðr sér fyr hondum.'

18. 'Now that's finished, the lore has been learnt,
and I'm ready to ride away from there;
put your mind to it and speak more fully:
what more will be in my life?'
19. 'You'll come upon Heimir's settlements²⁶
and be the glad guest of the people-king;
it's at an end, Sigurðr, that which I foresaw;
you shouldn't question Grípir still further like this!'
20. 'Now the words you speak cause me sorrow,
because you [do] see further [ahead], marshal;
you know of extreme anguish for Sigurðr —
that's why, Grípir, you don't say it!'
21. 'The youth of your life lay before me
most clearly to look upon;
not rightly am I reckoned counsel-wise,
nor any the more prescient — what I knew is ended!'
22. 'I know no one above ground²⁷
who sees further ahead than you, Grípir;
you mustn't hide it, even if it is hideous,
or if harm may come to my condition!'
23. 'Life is not laid out for you with shame —
let that be learned, glorious nobleman!
Because, announcer of the point-shower,²⁸
your name will be remembered as long as men live!'
24. 'I think this the worst [thing],
that Sigurðr must part from the marshal in such circumstances;
show me the way — all is laid out in advance —
if you will, famed maternal uncle!'²⁹
25. 'Now I shall speak to Sigurðr in full,
since the prince forces me to this;
you will surely know that he³⁰ does not lie:
one day is appointed for your death.'
26. 'I don't want [to incur] the wrath of the powerful people-king,
but would rather receive Grípir's good counsel;
now he wants³¹ to know for certain, even if it's unpleasant,
what Sigurðr plainly has in store.'³²

27. 'Fljóð er at Heimis, fagrt álitum —
hana Brynhildi bragnar nefna —
dóttir Buðla, en dýrr konungr,
harðugðikt man, Heimir, fœðir.'
28. 'Hvat er mik at því, þótt mær sé,
fogr álti, född at Heimis?
Þat skaltu, Grípir, górvva segja,
þvíat þú öll um sér ørlög fyrir!'
29. 'Hon firrir þik flestu gamni,
fogr álti, fóstra Heimis;
svefn þú né sefr, né um sakar dœmir,
gáraðu manna, nema þú mey sér!'
30. 'Hvat mun til líkna lagt Sigurði?
Segðu, Grípir, þat, ef þú sjá þikkisk;
mun ek mey ná mundi kaupa,
þá ina fogrur fylkis dóttur?'
31. 'It munuð alla eiða vinna,
fullfastliga — fá munuð halda;
verit hefir þú Gjúka gestr eina nótt,
mantattu horska Heimis fóstru.'
32. 'Hvárt er þá, Grípir? Get þú þess fyr mér!
Sér þú geðleysi í grams skapi,
er ek skal við mey þá málum slíta,
er ek alls hugar unna þóttumk?'
33. 'Þú verðr, siklingr, fyr svikum annars,
mundu Grímhildar gjalda ráða;
mun bjóða þér bjarthaddat man,
dóttur sína — dregr hon vél at gram!'
34. 'Mun ek við þá Gunnar górvva hleyti
ok Guðrúnu ganga at eiga?
Fullkvæni þá fylkir væri,
ef meintregar mér angraðit.'
35. 'Þik mun Grímhildr górvva véla;
mun hon Brynhildar biðja fýsa
Gunnari til handa, Gotna drótни;
heitr þú fljótliga fór fylkis móður!'

27. 'There's a woman at Heimir's, fair in appearance —
men call her Brynhildr³³ —
daughter of Buðli, and the worthy king, Heimir,
brings up a hard-minded maiden.'
28. 'What's it to me, even if the maiden is
fair in appearance, brought up at Heimir's?
You must tell it, Grípir, in full,
since you foresee all fates!'
29. 'She, Heimir's fosterling, fair in appearance;
will deprive you of most delight;
you won't sleep a sleep, nor judge lawsuits,
you won't heed men, unless you see that maiden!'³⁴
30. 'What will be laid down as comfort for Sigurðr?
Speak, Grípir, if you seem to see it;
will I manage to buy the girl with a bride-price,
that fair daughter of a marshal?'
31. 'You two will swear all oaths,³⁵
very firmly — few will hold;
[when] you have been Gjúki's guest for one night,
you won't recall Heimir's clever fosterling.'³⁶
32. 'What's [this], then, Grípir? Explain it for me!
Do you see capriciousness in the prince's character,
since I shall break my contract with the maiden,
whom I thought I loved with all my heart?'
33. 'You'll fall victim, prince, to the treacheries of another,
you'll pay for Grímhildr's counsels;³⁷
she'll offer you a bright-haired girl,
her daughter³⁸ — she'll plot against the prince!'
34. 'Will I, then, become an in-law to Gunnarr³⁹
and go to marry Guðrún?⁴⁰
The marshal⁴¹ would then be well-married,
if outrage-sorrows didn't cause me anguish.'
35. 'Grímhildr will trick you entirely;
she'll urge you to ask for Brynhildr
on behalf of Gunnarr, lord of the Gotar;⁴²
you'll immediately promise the journey to the marshal's mother!'⁴³

36. 'Mein eru fyr hǫndum, má ek líta þat;
 ratar górliga ráð Sigurðar
 ef ek skal mærrar meyjar biðja
 qðrum til handa, þeirar ek unna vel.'
37. 'Ér munuð allir eiða vinna,
 Gunnarr ok Hogni, en þú, gramr, þriði,
 þvíat litum víxla, er á leið eruð,
 Gunnarr ok þú — Grípir lýgr eigi!'
38. 'Hví gegnir þat? Hví skulum skipta
 litum ok látum er á leið erum?
 Par mun fláræði fylgja annat,
 atalt með qllu: enn segðu, Grípir!'
39. 'Lit hefir þú Gunnars ok læti hans,
 mælsku þína ok meginhyggjur;
 mundu fastna þér framlundaða
 fóstru Heimis — sér vætr fyr því!'
40. 'Verst hyggjum því, vándr munk heitinn,
 Sigurðr, með seggjum, at sógþoru!
 Vilda ek eigi vélum beita
 jofra brúði, er ek œzta veitk!'
41. 'Þú munt hvíla, hers oddviti,
 mærr, hjá meyju, sem þín móðir sé!
 Því mun uppi, meðan qld lifir,
 þjóðar þengill, þitt nafn vera!'
- 42 [43]. 'Saman munu brullaup bæði drukkin,
 Sigurðar ok Gunnars, í solum Gjúka;
 þá hǫmum víxlið, er it heim komið,
 hefir hvárr fyr því hyggju sína!'
- 43 [42]. 'Mun góða kván Gunnarr eiga,
 mærr, með mǫnnum — mér segðu, Grípir! —
 þóat hafi þrjár nætr þegns brúðr hjá mér,
 snarlynd, sofit? Slíks erut dœmi!'
44. 'Hvé mun at ynði eptir verða
 mægð með mǫnnum? Mér segðu, Grípir!
 Mun Gunnari til gamans ráðit
 síðan verða, eða sjálfum mér?'

36. 'Misfortunes are before me,⁴⁴ I can see that;
Sigurðr's decision-making will fall down entirely
if I have to ask for the excellent maiden,
whom I love well, on behalf of another.'
37. 'You'll all swear oaths —
Gunnarr and Högni, and you, prince, third —
as you'll exchange appearances, when you're on the way,
Gunnarr and you — Grípir does not lie!'⁴⁵
38. 'What does that mean? Why shall we exchange
appearances and manners when we're on the way?
There will be another deception accompanying [this one],
entirely dreadful — speak on, Grípir!'
39. 'You'll have Gunnar's appearance and his manner,
[but] your eloquence and great understanding;
you'll betroth yourself to the high-minded
fosterling of Heimir — you'll think nothing of it!'⁴⁶
40. 'I think this the worst [thing, that] I, Sigurðr,
will be called evil among men, in such circumstances!
I wouldn't use tricks against
the boars'⁴⁷ bride, whom I know to be the noblest!'
41. 'You will sleep, army's point-wise one,⁴⁸
glorious, beside the maiden, as if she were your mother!'⁴⁹
For that, nation's prince, your name
will be remembered as long as humanity lives!'
- 42 [43].⁵⁰ 'Both weddings will be drunk⁵¹ together,
Sigurðr's and Gunnarr's, in Gjúki's halls;
when you exchange skins, when you come home,
each will have his own mind about this!'
- 43 [42]. 'Will glorious Gunnarr have a good wife,
among people — tell me, Grípir! —
even though for three nights the thane's bride
has slept, bold-spirited, beside me? There are no precedents for such!'
44. 'How will this marital kinship between people
turn to happiness? Tell me, Grípir!
Will pleasure be assigned to Gunnarr
then, or to me myself?'

45. 'Minnir þik eiða, máttu þegja þó,
 antu Guðrúnu góðra ráða;
 en Brynhildr þikkisk, brúðr, vargefin,
 snót fiðr vélar sér at hefndum!'
46. 'Hvat mun at bótum brúðr sú taka,
 er vélar vér vífi gerðum?
 Hefir snót af mér svartna eiða,
 enga efnða, en unað lítit!'
47. 'Mun hon Gunnari górvva segja,
 at þú eigi vel eiðum þyrmðir,
 þá er ítr konungr af ǫllum hug,
 Gjúka arfi, á gram trúði.'
48. 'Hvat er þá, Grípir? Get þú þess fyr mér!
 Mun ek saðr vera at sognu þeiri?
 Eða lýgr á mik lofsael kona
 ok á sjálfa sik? Segðu, Grípir, þat!'
49. 'Mun fyr reiði rík brúðr við þik
 né af oftrega allvel skipa;
 viðr þú góðri grand aldregi,
 þó ér víf konungs vélum beittuð.'
50. 'Mun horskr Gunnarr at hvotun hennar,
 Guthormr ok Hogni, ganga síðan?
 Munu synir Gjúka á sifjugum mér
 eggjar rjóða? Enn segðu, Grípir!'
51. 'Þá er Guðrúnu grimt um hjarta —
 brœðr hennar þér til bana ráða —
 ok at øngu verðr ynði síðan
 vitru vífi — veldr því Grímildr.
52. 'Því skal hugga þik, hers oddviti,
 sú mun gipt lagið á grams ævi:
 munat mætri maðr á mold koma,
 und sólar sjöt, en þú, Sigurðr, þíkkir!'
53. 'Skiljumk heilir! Munat skopum vinna!
 Nú hefir þú, Grípir, vel górt, sem ek beiddak;
 fljótt myndir þú fríðri segja
 mína ævi, ef þú mættir þat!'

45. 'You'll recall your oaths, but be able to keep quiet,
you'll grant Guðrún a good marriage;
but Brynhildr, the bride, will think herself badly married,
the woman will find tricks to avenge herself!'⁵²
46. 'What will that bride accept as compensations,
when we have worked tricks on the wife?
The woman has sworn oaths from me,
none kept, and little contentment!'⁵³
47. 'She'll say clearly to Gunnarr,
that you didn't keep the oaths well,⁵⁴
when the noble king, with his whole heart,
Gjúki's heir,⁵⁵ trusted in the prince.'
48. 'What will happen then, Grípir? Explain this for me!
Will I truly be as in the tale?
Or will the famous woman lie about me
and about herself? Tell me that, Grípir!'
49. 'Out of wrath, from excessive grief,
the powerful bride will not treat you altogether well;
you'll never do harm to the good woman,
though you deceived the king's wife with tricks.'
50. 'Will wise Gunnarr, Guthormr⁵⁶ and Högni
accede to her incitement then?
Will the sons of Gjúki redder their sword-edges
on me, their in-law? Speak on, Grípir!'
51. 'Then, for Guðrún, there will be grimness of heart⁵⁷ —
her brothers will bring about your death⁵⁸ —
and contentment will then come to nothing⁵⁹
for the wise wife — Grím(h)ildr will cause this.'
52. 'You shall console yourself with this, army's point-wise one,
[that] this gift will be laid down in the prince's life:
a worthier man than you seem, Sigurðr,
won't come on [this] earth, under the sun's seat!'⁶⁰
53. 'Let's part in good spirits! One can't resist fate!
Now, Grípir, you've done well, as I asked;
you would soon have spoken more favourably
of my life, if you could have [done] that!'

Textual Apparatus to *Grípisspá*

Grípisspá] This poem is untitled in R; the title *Grípisspá* comes from later, paper manuscripts

Hann] Absent from R; supplied from later, paper manuscripts

3/1 *konungr*] R *konvng*

18/1 *Nú*] R *þa* (the emendation supplies alliteration)

22/7 *eða*] R *ep*

26/6 *viltki*] R *vilkit*

40/7 *brúði*] R *brvþr*

46/8 *unað*] R *vnat*

47/4 *þyrmðir*] R *þyrmir*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 This name appears related to *grípa* ‘to grasp’.
- 2 Grípir is the maternal uncle of Sigurðr, the hero of this and subsequent poems. The bond between maternal uncle and nephew was traditionally strong in early Germanic societies.
- 3 The man.
- 4 A name apparently based on *geit* ‘she-goat’.
- 5 Sigurðr refers to himself.
- 6 Grani is Sigurðr’s horse; the name derives from *grøn* ‘moustache’ or ‘lip’. This reference is a chronological anachronism in R because Sigurðr does not acquire Grani until the prose introduction to *Rm.*; in VS, however, Sigurðr does have Grani before visiting Grípir.
- 7 Literally, ‘mother’s brother’.
- 8 When not denoting an actual boar, *jofurr* is, as here, a common metaphor for ‘warrior’, ‘prince’.
- 9 I.e., the killing of Eylimi, Sigurðr’s grandfather, by Hundingr’s son Lyngvi with assistance from Óðinn. Lyngvi was Sigmundr’s rival for the hand of Hjordís (VS 11–12, 17).
- 10 Cf. *Rm.* 15–26.
- 11 I.e., become most widely known across the world.
- 12 Perhaps ‘Scree Heath’ and maybe identifiable as Knetterheide, Germany. The snake is Fáfnir.
- 13 ‘Ruler’, ‘Powerful One’ (cf. *regin* ‘divine powers’, ‘ruling gods’). He is Sigurðr’s foster-father.
- 14 ‘Embracer’, Reginn’s brother. Fáfnir, who became a giant snake, certainly embraced treasure; perhaps he also constricted his prey.
- 15 See the accounts of *Rm.* and *Fm.*
- 16 Alternatively, ‘longer’, ‘at greater length’, if *lengi* ‘at length’ is emended to *lengra* (cf. *Grp.* 18).
- 17 Cf. the concluding prose to *Fm.*

- 18 Gjúki is the father of Gunnarr, Högni and Guðrún, key figures in Sigurðr's story. The name *Gjúki* equates to *Cibica*, the name of an early Burgundian king.
- 19 This visit is mentioned in neither **R** nor **VS**, but cf. *Fm.* 41.
- 20 Grípir.
- 21 Brynhildr, as in **VS** 20 (*Sigrdrífa* in *Fm.* 44 and *Sd.*). The link later in this stanza with Helgi (Hundingsbani?) might also suggest a connection with Sigrún; alternatively, perhaps this Helgi is equivalent to the Hjálms-Gunnarr whom Brynhildr/Sigrdrífa slew in violation of Óðinn's command, as described in *Sd.* 4 pr. and in *Hlr.* 8.
- 22 The identity of this Helgi is uncertain (see previous footnote).
- 23 I.e., the sword. Cf. the initial prose to *Sd.*
- 24 Or 'woman'.
- 25 Cf. *Sd.*
- 26 Heimir is Brynhildr's foster-father. He is not named in subsequent poems in **R**, but cf. *Hlr.* 7. His name is based on *heimr* or *heima* 'home'.
- 27 I.e., living, not dead and buried.
- 28 A 'point-shower' is a hail of spears or arrows, a metaphor for 'battle'; its 'announcer' is a warrior.
- 29 Literally, 'mother's brother'.
- 30 Grípir refers to himself.
- 31 Sigurðr speaks of himself in the third person. Alternatively, emend *vill* to *vilk* 'I want'.
- 32 Literally, 'what Sigurðr plainly has before his hands.'
- 33 'Mail-Coat Battle'.
- 34 Cf. Sigurðr's visit to Heimir and sight of Brynhildr in **VS** 24–25.
- 35 Cf. **VS** 25.
- 36 Cf. **VS** 28.
- 37 In Eddic poems and **VS** Grímhildr (a name usually spelt *Grímildr* in **R**) is the wife of Gjúki and the mother of Gunnarr, Högni, Guthormr and Guðrún. Her name means either 'Grim/Fierce Battle' or 'Face-Mask Battle'. For her treachery, cf. **VS** 28.
- 38 Guðrún.
- 39 'Battle Army'. He is a reflex of a fifth-century Burgundian king called *Gundaharius*.
- 40 'Battle Rune' or 'God Rune'.
- 41 Sigurðr speaks of himself.
- 42 'Goths', or humans in general.
- 43 Cf. **VS** 28.
- 44 Literally, 'before (my) hands'.
- 45 Cf. **VS** 29.
- 46 Cf. **VS** 29.
- 47 Warriors, princes.
- 48 An honorific for a leader skilled with the points of weapons.
- 49 Cf. *Sg.* 4 and **VS** 29.

- 50 In this and the following stanza, the bracketed numbers reverse the manuscript order to indicate a more logical flow.
- 51 I.e., celebrated by drinking at a feast.
- 52 Cf. VS 30–32.
- 53 Or ‘... and is hardly contented.’
- 54 Cf. VS 31.
- 55 Gunnarr.
- 56 ‘God/Good/Battle Snake’.
- 57 Cf. *Gðr. I* and *Gðr. II*.
- 58 Sigurðr’s death is described in VS 32; see also *Br.* 4–6 and *Sg.* 20–29.
- 59 I.e., there will be no contentment.
- 60 I.e., under heaven, the sky.

Reginsmál

Reginsmál (Rm.) ‘The Sayings of Reginn’ is another *prosimetrum*. Its status as a distinct work bearing this title is attributable to modern editors; in **R** (fol. 28v–30r), it bears no such heading,¹ although its opening word clearly marks the start of a new compositional unit, its initial letter being a rubricated (but now faded) and enlarged *S*. *Rm.* should be taken together with *Fáfnismál*, the next poem (*prosimetrum*) in **R**.

After the synopsis of *Grp.*, it is really with *Rm.* that the story of Sigurðr gets under way, if only after much colourful information about how the troublesome god Loki’s earlier killing of a dwarf led to the cursing of treasure which Sigurðr will later take from the dragon Fáfnir, brother of Reginn, Sigurðr’s foster-father. It does so with some vigour, with Sigurðr taking the god Óðinn onboard his ship, learning battle-wisdom from him, and ultimately carving a ‘blood-eagle’ into the back of his father’s killer.

The narrative advances largely in simply-worded prose summaries, but there is also much verse dialogue, more characterful than that of *Grp.* In common with other Eddic dialogues, some of this poetry has a gnomic character and is mostly in *ljóðaháttir*, although there are some stanzas of *fornyrðislag*. Also shared with some preceding dialogue poems in **R** (*Vm.*, *Grm.* and *Hrbl.*) is the prominent involvement of an incognito Óðinn.

More specific Old Norse parallels to *Rm.* exist in:

- *VS* (13–15 and 17–18), which includes variants of stt. 1, 2, 6 and 18.
- *Norna-Gests þátr* ‘The Story of Norna-Gestr’ (4–6; *FSN I*), which includes variants of stt. 13–26. This story probably dates from the early fourteenth century.
- *SnESkáld* (I, 39–40, pp. 45–47), which tells the story of the killing of Otr and its aftermath.

These three texts also contain parallels to some of *Rm.*’s prose passages.

Comparison may also be made with the Faroese ballad *Regin smiður* ‘Regin the Smith’.

¹ It may originally have been headed simply *Frá Sigurði* ‘About Sigurðr’.

Synopsis

Prose: Sigurðr chose himself a horse called Grani from King Hjálprekr's stud. There he met Reginn, son of Hreiðmarr, who offered to foster and instruct him. Reginn told him of how three gods, Óðinn and Höenir and Loki, went to a waterfall, where Loki killed Reginn's brother, Otr, who was in the form of an otter. That evening, the gods showed Otr's skin to Hreiðmarr. Hreiðmarr and Reginn seized them and required them to cover the skin inside and out with gold. Loki then took the net of the sea-giantess Rán and went to the waterfall, where he caught the dwarf Andvari in the form of a pike.

Verse: Loki asks what sort of fish it is that fails to protect itself and demands that it find him gold (1). Andvari identifies himself and explains that he was destined to inhabit waterfalls (2). Loki asks him about the punishment meted out to those who insult each other (3), and Andvari answers (4).

Prose: Loki looked at the gold that Andvari owned, and even deprived him of the one ring that the dwarf had tried to withhold.

Verse: Andvari then declares that the gold will be the death of two brothers and a source of conflict for eight noblemen (5).

Prose: The gods covered the otter-skin, except for one whisker. At Hreiðmarr's insistence, Óðinn covered the whisker with the ring that Loki took from Andvari.

Verse: Loki declares the gold paid, but that it will be the death of both Hreiðmarr and Reginn (6). Hearing that, Hreiðmarr regrets not having killed Loki (7), who tells him that the curse will extend to those yet unborn (8). Hreiðmarr says he is not scared, and tells Loki to be off (9).

Prose: Hreiðmarr denied Fáfnir and Reginn compensation for Otr, their brother. Consequently, Fáfnir mortally wounded his father as he slept.

Verse: Hreiðmarr cries out to his daughters, Lyngheiðr and Lofnheiðr (10), but the former declares that a sister can scarcely avenge her father on her brother. Hreiðmarr urges Lyngheiðr, should she not bear a son, to have a daughter whose son might avenge him (11).

Prose: Fáfnir took all the gold and denied any to Reginn, who in turn asked Lyngheiðr for advice.

Verse: Lyngheiðr tells him to ask Fáfnir for his share in a friendly manner (12).

Prose: Reginn told these happenings to Sigurðr.

Verse: Reginn declares that Sigurðr has arrived at his home (13), and that he shall foster him, destined as Sigurðr is to become the most powerful man on earth (14).

Prose: Fáfnir, now in the form of a snake, lay on the treasure on Gnitaheiðr and had a helmet of terror. Reginn forged the marvellous sword Gramr for Sigurðr, and incited him to kill Fáfnir.

Verse: Sigurðr (probably) indicates that he wants to avenge his father first (15).

Prose: Hjálprekr gave Sigurðr a naval force to avenge his father. The fleet encountered a severe storm and turned toward a promontory on which a man was standing.

Verse: The man asks the sailors to identify themselves (16). Reginn identifies them as Sigurðr and his men (17). The man on the cliff identifies himself by various names (aliases of Óðinn), and requests passage (18).

Prose: They granted him that, and the storm abated.

Verse: Sigurðr (probably) asks the man to identify the best battle-omens for him (19), which he does (20–25).

Prose: Sigurðr slew Lyngvi and Hundingr's other sons in battle.

Verse: Reginn triumphantly records the incision of an 'eagle' on Lyngvi's back and praises Sigurðr (26).

Prose: Sigurðr returned to Hjálprekr's, and Reginn incited him to kill Fáfnir.

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Reginsmál

Sigurðr gekk til stóðs Hjálpreks ok kaus sér af hest einn, er Grani var kallaðr síðan. Þá var kominn Reginn til Hjálpreks, sonr Hreiðmars. Hann var hverjum manni hagari, ok dvergr of vox. Hann var vitr, grimmr ok fjolkunnigr.

Reginn veitti Sigurði fóstr ok kennslu ok elskoði hann mjök. Hann sagði Sigurði frá forellri sínu ok þeim atburðum at Óðinn ok Hœnir ok Loki hofðu komit til Andvarafors. Í þeim forsi var fjöldi fiska. Einn dvergr hét Andvari. Hann var löngum í forsinum í geddu líki ok fekk sér þar matar.

‘Otr hét bróðir várr’, kvað Reginn, ‘er opt fór í forsinn í otrs líki. Hann hafði tekit einn lax ok sat á árbakkanum ok át blundandi. Loki laust hann með steini til bana. Þóttusk Æsir mjök hepnir verit hafa ok flógu belg af otrinum.

Þat sama kveld sóttu þeir gisting til Hreiðmars ok sýndu veiði sína. Þá tóku vér þá hondum ok lögðum þeim fjörlausn at fylla otrbelginn með gulli, ok hylja útan ok með rauðu gulli. Þá sendu þeir Loka at afla gullsins. Hann kom til Ránar ok fekk net hennar ok fór þá til Andvarafors ok kastaði netinu fyrir gedduna, en hon hljóp í netit.

Þá mælti Loki:

1. ‘Hvat er þat fiska, er renn flóði í?
Kannat sér við víti varask!
Hofuð þitt leystu Helju ór:
finn mér lindar loga!’
2. ‘Andvari ek heiti, Óinn hét minn faðir,
margan hefi ek fors um farit;
aumlig Norn skóp oss í árdaga
at ek skylda í vatni vaða.’
3. ‘Segðu þat, Andvari,’ kvað Loki, ‘ef þú eiga vill
líf í lýða solumn:
hver gjold fá gumna synir,
ef þeir hoggvask orðum á?’
4. ‘Ofrgjöld fá gumna synir,
þeir er Vaðgelmí vaða;
ósaðra orða, hverr er á annan lýgr,
of lengi leiða limar!’
5. ‘Þat skal gull, er Gustr átti,
brœðrum tveim at bana verða,
ok զðlingum átta at rógi —
mun míns fjár mangi njóta!’

Loki sá allt gull, þat er Andvari átti. En er hann hafði fram reitt gullit, þá hafði hann eptir einn hring, ok tók Loki þann af honum. Dvergrinn gekk inn í steininn ok mælti:

The Sayings of Reginn

Sigurðr went to Hjálprekr's stud and chose himself a horse, which was called Grani thereafter. Then Reginn, son of Hreiðmarr,¹ had come to Hjálprekr's. He was more skilful than any man, and a dwarf in stature. He was wise, grim and skilled in magic.

Reginn offered Sigurðr fosterage and instruction and loved him greatly. He told Sigurðr about his² forefathers and those events in which Óðinn and Höenir and Loki³ had come to Andvarafors.⁴ In that waterfall was a multitude of fish. There was a dwarf called Andvari.⁵ He was in the waterfall for a long time in the form of a pike and got himself food there.

'Our brother was called Otr,'⁶ said Reginn, 'who often went into the waterfall in the form of an otter. He had caught a salmon and was sitting on the riverbank and eating with his eyes closed. Loki stuck him to death with a stone. The Æsir⁷ thought they had been very lucky and flayed the skin from the otter.'

The same evening they sought lodging at Hreiðmarr's and showed their kill. Then we seized them and imposed on them as ransom the requirement that the otter-skin be filled with gold, and also to cover the outside with red gold. Then they sent Loki to procure the gold. He came to Rán⁸ and got her net and went then to Andvarafors and cast the net before the pike, and it leapt into the net.

Then Loki said:

- 1.⁹ 'What sort of fish is that, which swims in the flood?
It doesn't know how to guard itself against misfortune!
Free your head from Hel;¹⁰
find me "blaze of the brook"!'¹¹

- 2.¹² 'I am called Andvari, my father was called Óinn,¹³
I have travelled though many a waterfall;
in early days a wretched Norn shaped [as destiny] for us
that I should wade in water.'

3. 'Tell [me] this, Andvari', said Loki, 'if you want to have
life in the halls of people:
what retribution do the sons of men receive,
if they hack at¹⁴ each other with words?'¹⁵

4. 'The sons of men receive excessive retribution,
those who wade Vaðgelmir,¹⁶
[for] everyone who lies about another,
the ramifications of untrue words accompany him long [after]!'¹⁷

Loki saw all the gold, that which Andvari owned. And when he¹⁸ had brought forth the gold, then he kept back one ring,¹⁹ and Loki took that from him. The dwarf went into the stone²⁰ and said:

5. 'That gold, which Gustr²¹ owned,
shall be the death of two brothers,²²
and for eight noblemen²³ a source of strife —
no one will profit from *my* possessions!'

Æsir reiddu Hreiðmari féit ok tráðu upp otrbelginn ok reistu á fœtr. Þá skyldu Æsirnir hlaða upp gullinu ok hylja. En er þat var gjort, gekk Hreiðmarr fram ok sá eitt granahár, ok bað hylja. Þá dró Óðinn fram hringinn Andvaranaut ok hulði hárit.

6. 'Gull er þér nú *reitt*', kvað Loki, 'en þú gjöld hefir mikil míns höfuðs;
syni þínum verðra sæla skópuð —
þat verðr ykkarr beggja baní!'

7. Hreiðmarr sagði:
'Gjafar þú gaft, gaftattu ástgjafar,
gaftattu af heilum hug!
Fjørvi yðru skylduð ér firðir vera,
ef ek vissa þat fár fyrir!'

8. 'ENN er verra — þat vita þíkkjumk —
niðja stríð ónept;
jófra óborna hygg ek þá enn vera,
er þat er til hatrs hugat!'

9. 'Rauðu gulli', kvað Hreiðmarr, 'hugg ek mik ráða munu,
svá lengi sem ek lifi;
hót þín hræðumk ekki lyf,
ok haldið heim heðan!'

Fáfnir ok Reginn kröfðu Hreiðmar niðgjalda eptir Otr, bróður sinn. Hann kvað nei við. En Fáfnir lagði sverði Hreiðmar, fóður sinn, sofanda. Hreiðmarr kallaði á dœtr sínar:

10. 'Lyngheiðr ok Lofnheiðr, vitið mínu líf farit!
Mart er þat er þórf þjár!'

- Lyngheiðr svaraði:
'Fátt mun systir, þótt fóður missi,
hefna hlýra harms!'

11. 'AL þú þó dóttur', kvað Hreiðmarr, 'dís úlfshuguð,
ef þú getrat son við siklingi!
Fá þú mey mann í meginþarfar!
Þá mun þeirar sonr þíns harms reka!'

Þá dó Hreiðmarr, en Fáfnir tók gullit alt. Þá beiddisk Reginn at hafa fóðurarf sinn, en Fáfnir galt þar nei við. Þá leitaði Reginn ráða við Lyngheiði, systur sína, hvernig hann skyldi heimta fóðurarf sinn. Hon kvað:

12. 'Bróður kveðja skaltu blíðliga
arfs ok œðra hugar;
era þat hoeft at þú hjørvi skyllir
kveðja Fáfni fjár!'

The Æsir paid Hreiðmarr the treasure and filled up the otter-skin and stood it on its legs. Then the Æsir had to pile up the gold and cover it. And when that was done, Hreiðmarr went forward and saw a whisker, and he told them to cover it. Then Óðinn drew forth the ring Andvaranautr²⁴ and covered the hair.

- 6.²⁵ ‘The gold is now paid to you’, said Loki, ‘and you have
 a great payment for my head;
 for your son happiness will not be shaped²⁶ —
 it will be the death of you both!’

7. Hreiðmarr said:
 ‘You gave gifts, [but] you didn’t give love-gifts,
 you didn’t give them with your whole heart!
 You’d have been separated from your life,²⁷
 if I’d known of this mischief before!’

- 8.²⁸ ‘It’s even worse — I think I know this —
 the unceasing strife²⁹ of kinsmen,³⁰
 I think the boars³¹ are still unborn
 for whom this hatred is intended!’

9. ‘With red gold,’ said Hreiðmarr, ‘I think I shall rule,
 as long as I live;
 your threat scares me not in the slightest,
 and go home, [away] from here!’

Fáfnir and Reginn demanded kin-compensation from Hreiðmarr after Otr, their brother. He said no to that. And Fáfnir ran Hreiðmarr, his father, through with a sword, as he was sleeping. Hreiðmarr called to his daughters:

10. ‘Lyngheiðr and Lofnheiðr,³² know that my life is destroyed!
 It’s many a thing that need compels!’

- Lyngheiðr answered:
 ‘Scarcely will a sister, even if she loses her father,
 avenge that sorrow on her brother!’

11. ‘Yet bear a daughter,’ said Hreiðmarr, ‘wolf-hearted woman,
 if you don’t beget a son by a prince!
 Get for the maid a man in great need!³³
 Then their son will avenge your sorrow!’

Then Hreiðmarr died, and Fáfnir took all the gold. Then Reginn asked to have his patrimony, but Fáfnir paid with a ‘no’.³⁴ Then Reginn sought advice from Lyngheiðr, his sister, as to how he should obtain his patrimony. She said:

12. ‘You must ask your brother amiably
 for your inheritance and in a better spirit;
 it’s not fitting that you should
 demand treasure from Fáfnir with a sword!’

Þessa hluti sagði Reginn Sigurði. Einn dag, er hann kom til húsa Regins, var honum vel fagnat. Reginn kvað:

13. ‘Kominn er hingat konr Sigmundar,
seggr inn snarráði, til sala várra;
móð hefir meira en maðr gamall,
ok er mér fangs vón at frekum úlf!
14. ‘Ek mun fœða fólkdjarfán gram;
nú er Yngva konr með oss kominn;
sjá mun ræsir ríkstr und sólu —
þrymr um qll lönd ørløgsímu!’

Sigurðr var þá jafnan með Regin, ok sagði hann Sigurði at Fáfnir lá á Gnitaheiði ok var í orms líki. Hann átti ægishjálm, er qll kvikvindi hræddusk við.

Reginn gerði Sigurði sverð, er Gramr hétt. Þat var svá hvast at hann brá því ofan í Rín ok létt reka ullarlagð fyrir straumi, ok tók í sundr lagðinn sem vatnit. Því sverði klauf Sigurðr í sundr steðja Regins.

Eptir þat eggjaði Reginn Sigurð at vega Fáfni. Hann sagði:

15. ‘Hátt munu hlæja Hundings synir,
þeir er Eylimar aldrs synjuðu,
ef meirr tiggja munar at sökja
hringa rauða en hefnd fóður!’

Hjálprekr konungr fekk Sigurði skipalið til fóðurhefnda. Peir fengu storm mikinn ok beittu fyrir bergsnoð nakkvara. Maðr einn stóð á bergenう ok kvað:

16. ‘Hverir ríða þar Rævils hestum
hávar unnir, haf glymjanda?
Seglvigg eru sveita stokkin,
munat vágmarar vind um standask!’

Reginn svaraði:

17. ‘Hér eru vér Sigurðr á sætrjám,
er oss byrr gefinn við bana sjálfan!
Fellr brattr breki brondum haeri,
hlunnvigg hrapa — hvern spyrr at því?’

18. ‘Hnikar hétu mik, þá er Hugin gladdi
Völsungr ungi, ok vegit hafði;
nú máttu kalla “karl af bergi,”
Feng eða Fjolni — far vil ek þiggja!’

Peir viku at landi, ok gekk karl á skip, ok lægði þá veðrit.

Reginn told these things to Sigurðr. One day, when he³⁵ came to Reginn's farmstead, he was greeted well. Reginn said:

13.³⁶ 'Sigmundr's offspring has come here,
 the man of resolute counsel, to our halls;
 he has more spirit than an old man,
 and I expect a wrestle with a ravenous wolf!³⁷

14.³⁸ 'I shall bring up the battle-brave prince;
 now Yngvi's³⁹ offspring has come among us;
 that prince will be the most powerful under the sun —
 his fate-threads lie⁴⁰ across all lands!'⁴¹

Sigurðr was then always with Reginn, and he told Sigurðr that Fáfnir lay on Gnitheiðr and was in the form of a snake. He⁴² had a helm of terror, of which all living things were afraid.

Reginn made Sigurðr a sword, which was called Gramr.⁴³ It was so sharp that he dipped it in the Rin⁴⁴ and let a tuft of wool drift with the current, and it took the tuft apart as [easily as it did] the water. With that sword Sigurðr clove asunder Reginn's anvil.

After that Reginn incited Sigurðr to slay Fáfnir. He⁴⁵ said:

15.⁴⁶ 'Hundingr's sons will laugh loudly,
 they who denied Eylimi⁴⁷ his old age,⁴⁸
 if the prince's wishes are more to seek
 red rings than revenge for his father!'

King Hjálprekr gave Sigurðr a naval force to avenge his father. They ran into a great storm and tacked for a certain rocky promontory. A man was standing on the cliff and he said:

16.⁴⁹ 'Who is riding there, on Rævill's⁵⁰ horses,
 the high waves, the roaring sea?
The sail-horses⁵¹ are splattered with sweat,
the wave-steeds won't withstand the wind!'

Reginn answered:
17.⁵² 'Here we are with Sigurðr on sea-trees,⁵³
since a fair wind is given to us toward death itself!
The steep breaker falls from higher than the prow-boards,
the roller-steeds⁵⁴ stumble — who asks about this?'

18.⁵⁵ 'They called me Hnikarr,⁵⁶ when young Völsungr
gladdened Huginn,⁵⁷ and he had slain;
now you can me "old man from the cliff,"
Fengr⁵⁸ or Fjölnir⁵⁹ — I want to receive passage!'

They steered to land, and the old man went on to a ship, and then the weather calmed.⁶⁰

19. 'Segðu mér þat, Hnikarr, allz þú hvártveggja veizt,
goða heill ok guma:
hver bozt eru, ef berjask skal,
heill at sverða svipun?'
- Hnikarr kvað:
20. 'Morg eru góð, ef gumar vissi,
heill at sverða svipun;
dyggja fylgju hygg ek ins døkkva vera
at hrottameiði hrafns.'
21. 'Þat er annat, ef þú ert út um kominn
ok ert á braut búinn:
tvá þú lítr á tái standa
hróðrfúsa hali.'
22. 'Pat er it þriðja, ef þú þjóta heyrir
úlf und asklimum;
heilla auðit verðr þér af hjálmstöfum,
ef þú sér þá fyrri fara.'
23. 'Engr skal gumna í gógn vega
síð skínandi systur mána;
þeir sigr hafa, er sjá kunnu,
hjörleiks hvatir, eða hamalt fylkja.'
24. 'Pat er fár mikit, ef þú fœti drepr,
þars þú at vígi veðr;
tálar dísir standa þér á tvær hliðar
ok vilja þík sáran sjá.'
25. 'Kemðr ok þveginn skal kœnna hvern
ok at morni mettr,
þvíat ósýnt er, hvar at apni kœmr;
illt er fyr heill at hrapa.'

Capitulum

Sigurðr átti orrostu mikla við Lyngva, Hundings son, ok brœðr hans. Þar fell Lyngvi ok þeir þrí brœðr. Eptir orrostu kvað Reginn:

26. 'Nú er blóðugr ɔrn bitrum hjørvi
bana Sigmundar á baki ristinn!
Ǫngr er fremri, sá er fold ryði,
hilmis arfi, ok Hugin gladdi!'

Heim fór Sigurðr til Hjálpreks. Þá eggjaði Reginn Sigurð til at vega Fáfni.

- 19.⁶¹ ‘Tell me this, Hnikarr, since you know
the omens of both gods and humans:
what are the best omens, if one has to do battle,
at the swinging of swords?’⁶²
- Hnikarr said:
- 20.⁶³ ‘There are many good signs, if men [only] knew them,
at the swinging of swords;
I think the dark raven is a doughty escort
for a sword-tree.’⁶⁴
- 21.⁶⁵ ‘This is the second, if you’ve come outside
and are ready for the road:
you see standing on the threshold⁶⁶
two fame-eager fellows.
- 22.⁶⁷ ‘This is the third, if you hear
a wolf howling beneath ash-branches;⁶⁸
good luck will granted to you from helm-staves,⁶⁹
if you see them travelling first.⁷⁰
- 23.⁷¹ ‘No man shall fight when facing towards
the late-shining sister of the moon;⁷²
they have victory, whetters of sword-play,⁷³
who know how to see, or how to form a snout-like phalanx.⁷⁴
- 24.⁷⁵ ‘It’s a great hazard, if you stub your toe,⁷⁶
when you wade into battle;
treacherous females⁷⁷ stand on both sides of you
and want to see you wounded.
- 25.⁷⁸ ‘Combed and washed shall every wise man be
and fully fed in the morning,
because it’s uncertain where one will come to by evening;
it’s [a] bad [idea] to press ahead despite an omen.’⁷⁹

Capitulum⁸⁰

Sigurðr had a great battle against Lyngvi, Hundingr’s son, and his brothers. There Lyngvi fell and those three brothers. After the battle Reginn said:

26. ‘Now a bloody eagle is carved with bitter sword
on the back of the slayer of Sigmundr!⁸¹
None is more outstanding [than] the one who might redder the earth,
the ruler’s heir,⁸² and gladden Huginn!’

Sigurðr went back to Hjálprekr’s. Then Reginn incited Sigurðr to kill Fáfnir.

Textual Apparatus to *Reginsmál*

Reginsmál] This title, now traditional, is not in R; it is supplied editorially. NK detects a faded heading in R, which it suggests reads *Frá Sigurði* 'About Sigurðr'.

Sigurðr] The first letter is large and red, but faded, in R

sonr] R *sonar*

1/6 *lindar*] R *linar*

5/3 *braðrum tveim*] R *brærum tvem*

6/1 *reitt*] R absent, supplied from VS 14

8/3 *ónept*] R *vm nept*

10/1 *Lyngeiðr*] R *Lyngeiþr*

10/4 *Fátt*] R *Far*

12/1 *Bróður*] R *Brvðar*

12 pr. *hluti*] R *lvti*

14 pr. *qlí*] R *os*

14 pr. *Gramr*] R *gram*

15/3 *þeir*] R *þr*

19/2 *hvárttveggja*] R *hvartveGia*

22/5 *hjálmstofum*] R *hilm stofom*

Capitulum] Rubricated but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; the reading is therefore reliant on the transcription therein

Notes to the Translation

- 1 The meaning of his name is uncertain.
- 2 Reginn's.
- 3 Three gods.
- 4 'Andvari's Waterfall'.
- 5 ON *andvari* elsewhere means 'gurnard' (cf. the dwarf's pike-form), 'care, anxiety' and 'breeze' (cf. *Gustr* 'Gust' in Rm. 5).
- 6 'Otter'.
- 7 Or simply 'gods'; either way, the reference is to Óðinn, Hœnir and Loki.
- 8 'Plunder, Robbery', wife of the sea-giant Ægir.
- 9 VS 14 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 10 The underworld land of the dead.
- 11 A kenning for 'gold'. Emendation of *linar* (and the corresponding *lionar* of VS) to *lindar* 'of the brook' is not the only way to make sense of this phrase; other possible emendations, which also yield 'gold'-kennings, are *linnar loga* 'flame/blaze of the snake' and *liðar loga* 'flame/blaze of the (arm/finger-)joint'.

- 12 VS 14 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 13 'Timid/Fearful One'. Instead of *Óinn*, VS 14 has *Óðinn*, which, as the 'easier' reading, is probably a substitution.
- 14 I.e., wound.
- 15 This question appears irrelevant in the context, and some scholars therefore consider this stanza a likely interpolation. That Loki should want this question answered is, however, not out of character, given his inclination to invective (see *Ls*).
- 16 Possibly 'Wading-Place Yeller', presumably a river.
- 17 The waders are probably dead; cf. *Vsp*. 38, *Grm*. 21.
- 18 Andvari.
- 19 This description and the following stanza probably contributed to J. R. R. Tolkien's conception of the One Ring in *The Lord of the Rings*.
- 20 Dwarves live in rocks.
- 21 'Gust', perhaps an alias of Andvari or the name of one of his forebears.
- 22 Presumably Reginn and Fáfnir.
- 23 If this number is meant precisely, not just to indicate 'no small number', the eight noblemen may be Sigurðr, Guthormr, Gunnarr, Högni, Atli, Erpr, Sǫrli and Hamðir.
- 24 'Andvari's Gift', evidently the ring that Loki took from Andvari.
- 25 VS 14 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 26 I.e., ordained.
- 27 I.e., killed.
- 28 This stanza is apparently spoken by Loki.
- 29 Or 'grief'.
- 30 This translation reflects just one of many explanations that scholars have proposed for a difficult line.
- 31 When not denoting an actual boar, *jofurr* is, as here, a common metaphor for 'warrior' or 'prince'.
- 32 Perhaps 'Heather Heath' and 'Praise Heath', but *heiðr* can mean 'bright' as well as 'heath'.
- 33 Whether the 'great need' is the man's or Lyngheiðr's is unclear.
- 34 I.e., he refused.
- 35 Sigurðr.
- 36 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 5 (FSN I; cited by chapter) has a variant of this stanza: 'Kominn er híngat konr Sigmundar, / seggr inn snarráði, til sala vorra, / megn hefir mikit, en ek maðr gamall, / er mér fangs ván at frekum úlfí' 'Sigmundr's offspring has come here, the man of resolute counsel, to our halls; he has great strength, but I [am] an old man; I expect a wrestle with a ravenous wolf!'
- 37 Proverbial. The 'wolf' is Sigurðr, whom Reginn expects to be hard to handle.
- 38 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 5 has a variant of this stanza: 'Ek mun fræða fólkdjarfán gram; / nú er Yngva konr með oss kominn; / sjá mun ræsir, ríkstr und sólu, / frægr um lönd öll með lofi mínu [v.l. sínu]' 'I shall instruct the battle-brave prince; now Yngvi's offspring has come among us; that prince will be the most powerful under the sun, famous throughout all lands with my [v.l. 'his'] praise!'

- 39 A name of the god Freyr.
- 40 Or ‘spread out, extend’.
- 41 Cf. *HH. I* 3–4.
- 42 Fáfnir.
- 43 ‘Angry’, ‘Hostile’.
- 44 The Rhine.
- 45 Probably Sigurðr.
- 46 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 5 has a variant of this stanza, spoken by Sigurðr: ‘Hátt munu hlægja Hundings synir, / þeir er Eylimi aldrs vörnuðu, / ef mik tregar meirr, at sækja / hringa rauða enn hefna föður’ ‘Hundingr’s sons will laugh loudly, they who denied Eylimi his old age, if I desire more to seek red rings than to avenge my father!’
- 47 Sigurðr’s maternal grandfather.
- 48 I.e., who killed Eylimi.
- 49 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 6 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 50 Or ‘Ræfill’s’. A sea-king; the meaning of his name is uncertain.
- 51 Ships.
- 52 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 6 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 53 Ships. *Norna-Gests þáttr* 6 instead has *á sjó komnir* ‘(we have) come on the sea’.
- 54 Ships, which were launched using rollers.
- 55 VS 17 has a close variant of this stanza. *Norna-Gests þáttr* 6 has another, with *víða* ‘widely’ instead of *ungi* ‘young’, and *karl á bjargi* ‘old man on the cliff’ instead of *karl af bergi* ‘old man from the cliff’.
- 56 An alias of Óðinn.
- 57 One of Óðinn’s ravens, who is gladdened by carrion. Whether the ‘young Volsungr’ who gladdened him was Volsungr himself or Sigurðr is uncertain.
- 58 ‘Gripper’, ‘Seizer’, another alias of Óðinn.
- 59 ‘Very Wise One’ or ‘Hidden One/Concealer’, another alias of Óðinn.
- 60 The calming is not, of course, coincidental; nor was the storm’s onset.
- 61 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 6 has a close variant of this stanza; it identifies the speaker as Sigurðr.
- 62 I.e., in combat.
- 63 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 6 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 64 Warrior.
- 65 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 6 has a variant of this stanza, with *til burtferðar* ‘(ready) for departure’ in place of *ert á braut* ‘you are (ready) for the road/the off’, and *hróðrfulla* ‘full of praise’ instead of *hróðrfusa* ‘praise-eager’.
- 66 Or the path at the entrance to, and along the front of, the building from which you are setting out. The idea is doubtless that they will be keen to accompany you.
- 67 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 6 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 68 Possibly the branches of the world-ash Yggdrasill.
- 69 Apparently warriors, likened to staffs wearing helmets.

- 70 Or ‘travelling’ in front. The sense is perhaps that you are in luck if you see your enemies before they see you, or if you see them in front of you. This stanza appears to record two omens, not one.
- 71 *Norna-Gests þáttir* 6 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 72 The sun. The moon is perhaps personified as Máni here.
- 73 Warriors.
- 74 Specifically, a formation that resembles a boar’s snout.
- 75 *Norna-Gests þáttir* 6 has a close variant of this stanza; instead of *at vígi veðr* ‘(when you) wade into battle’, it has *at vígi vegr* ‘(when you) fight in battle’.
- 76 Literally ‘if you strike with (your) foot’.
- 77 Supernatural women; cf. *Grm.* 53, *HH. I* 16, *Sd.* 27, *Hm.* 15, 28.
- 78 *Norna-Gests þáttir* 6 has a variant of this stanza: ‘*Kembdr ok þveginn skal kennast hverr, / ok at morgni mettr, / þvíat óvist er, hvar at aptni kemr, / illt er fyrri heill at hrappa*’ ‘Combed and washed shall each man know himself (to be), and full of food in the morning, because it’s uncertain where he will come to in the evening; it’s a bad idea to press ahead despite an omen.’
- 79 I.e., an omen to the contrary.
- 80 Latin for ‘little head’, used to mark the start of a new section.
- 81 A reference to the supposed (and supposedly Óðinnic) practice of, according to the most extreme of various, increasingly lurid accounts, cutting open the ribcage of a fallen enemy from behind and then drawing out the lungs, so that they lay like a pair of eagle’s wings spread across his back. Cf. *Sd.* 16.
- 82 Sigurðr.

Fáfnismál

The title *Fáfnismál* (*Fm.*) is post-medieval, as is probably the perception of *Fm.* (R fol. 30r–31v) as an entity distinct from *Rm.* and *Sd.*

To a modern audience possibly expecting ‘The Sayings/Lay of Fáfnir’ to include a vivid account of a dragon-fight comparably dramatic to those of Pórr against the Miðgarðsormr (in *Vsp.* and *Hym.*) and of Beowulf against the firedrake (in the Old English *Beowulf*), it may both surprise and disappoint. For *Fm.* is another *prosimetrum* (with verses in *ljóðaháttir* and *fornyrðislag*) in which the action advances in rudimentary prose. Most strikingly, after a few preparatory details, the introductory prose merely records matter-of-factly that Sigurðr pierced Fáfnir’s heart with his sword, whereupon the snake writhed and the pair began a conversation. No poetic description of the actual act of dragon-slaying is even attempted, and it therefore makes little impression, in contrast to the more satisfactorily vibrant depictions of this feat and related events on Swedish runestones and Norwegian stave-churches.

Nor, surprisingly, may this killing of a giant snake by the Germanic North’s greatest medieval hero appear especially heroic now, though it was presumably greatly admired in medieval times. Whereas, for example, in *Beowulf*, the eponymous warrior trumpets his advance into the lands of giants, wolves and water-snakes, before beheading a giantess in ferocious hand-to-hand combat, *Fm.*’s Sigurðr is a stealth assassin who, having planned and prepared his attack, waits in concealment for a foe whom he pierces mortally from beneath with a peerless weapon. It is a killing conducted with consummate, if unfair, efficiency, and its implicit celebration through multiple and widespread portrayals in medieval literature and art suggests that, in contrast to some modern perceptions, it was formerly thought that the martial hero should command not just courage, strength and determination, but also a ruthless precision informed by knowledge of the only or most effective way to win, especially if the enemy himself had an unfair advantage (Fáfnir wore a ‘helm of terror’). As such, aspects of Sigurðr’s killing of Fáfnir find broad parallel elsewhere in early medieval European literature, especially that of Ireland. Most notably, in medieval Irish literature, Cú Chulainn, Ulster’s pre-eminent fighter, dispatches ostensibly impenetrable human foes by anal penetration from below with a unique spear, the *gae bolga*, which he alone commanded and knew how to use—an act both singularly effective and unfair.¹ Another example,

¹ See E. Pettit, ‘Cú Chulainn’s *gae bolga* — from Harpoon to Stingray-Spear?’’, *Studia Hibernica* 41 (2015), 9–48.

from England, is that of the spearman who, at Stamford Bridge on 25 September 1066, supposedly dispatched a lone Norwegian, who alone had withstood a series of Englishmen, by stabbing him from below, according to one account in the privates through openings in the bridge.² *Fm.*, therefore, serves as a reminder of the differences of perspective that must be appreciated when evaluating literature from a different time and culture. What we are likely to want from a poem about a particular dragon-killing is not necessarily what—or not only what—a medieval Norse audience wanted or had come to expect. Once this point is accepted, *Fm.* need not be deprecated for what it is not (an action-packed account of a dragon-slaying) but appreciated for what it mainly is, namely a record of conversations in verse between Sigurðr and the dying Fáfnir,³ and between Sigurðr and Reginn, with additional utterances by discerning nuthatches.

Fm.'s conversational verses have strong general affiliations with Eddic wisdom poems, instances of which occur among the preceding mythological texts in **R**,⁴ and which, like *Fm.*, are mainly in *ljóðaháttr*.⁵ Among these is *Vm.*, which records a life-or-death contest between the god Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir, an extremely learned *jötunn* ('devouring') giant, to determine who knows more about mythological matters. Having arrived at the giant's home and concealed his true identity, Óðinn answers his host's questions and then poses his own. After being told the manner of his death at Ragnarok, he then asks an unfair question which Vafþrúðnir cannot possibly answer, but which reveals his identity. The presumed conclusion is that the giant forfeits his life, having been outwitted by his concealed foe. Broadly similarly, in *Fm.* (although its telling blow comes at the start), Sigurðr, a concealed Óðinnic warrior,⁶ sneakily takes the life of a *jötunn*-snake (see st. 29) called *Fáfnir* 'Embracer' (compare *Vafþrúðnir* 'Wrapping-Powerful One') and engages in dialogue during which he elicits mythological lore, including information concerning Ragnarok (stt. 14–15) and learns of his demise (st. 9). Nor may it be wholly coincidental that in another Óðinnic

2 See T. Arnold, ed., *Henrici Archidiaconi Huntendunensis Historia Anglorum. The History of the English, by Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, from A.C. 55 to A.D. 1154* (London: Longman, 1879), p. 200; cf. J. Earle and C. Plummer, ed., *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), I, 198, II, 256; T. D. Hardy, ed., *Willelmi Malmesbiensis Monachi Gesta Regum Anglorum, atque Historia Novella*, 2 vols. (London: Bentley, 1840), I, 386–87. Understandably, such a method of killing might also be deemed despicable, depending on the victim and the chronicler's perspective: for example, a certain Duke Edric supposedly concealed himself in a pit beneath a latrine, from where he fatally stabbed King Edmund 'Ironside' in the privates, a deed for which he was brutally executed; see Hardy, *Willelmi ... Gesta Regum Anglorum*, I, 303; Arnold, *Henrici ... Historia Anglorum*, 185–86; J. P. Migne, *Patrologia latina* 195, col. 733; cf. T. D. Hardy and C. T. Martin, ed. and trans., *Lestorie des Engles solum la translacion maistre Geffrei Gaimar*, 2 vols. (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1888–89), II, 139–40.

3 This conversation is an obvious inspiration for the dialogue between the hobbit Bilbo Baggins and the dragon Smaug in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*.

4 Note the verbal parallel between the first line of *Fm.* 20 and *Háv.* 112 *et seq.*

5 Some of the stanzas spoken by nuthatches in *Fm.* are in *fornyrðislag*; these include all five concluding stanzas.

6 See *Rm.* 16–25; *VS* 18.

wisdom-poem, *Grm.*, the incognito god's oppressor, Geirrøðr, namesake of a famous giant, ultimately dies by stumbling onto his own (implicitly Óðinnic) sword—he too is taken by surprise by Óðinn and pierced from below.

The wise speaking birds whom the hero understands in *Fm.* find parallel in, for example, *HHv.* 1–4 and *Rþ.* 44, 47. More closely related to *Fm.* are chapters 18–20 of *VS*, which give another account of the same events, including a less perfunctory prose version of the killing; it is an account for which a version of *Fm.* is clearly a major source. A close variant of st. 13 is quoted in *SnEGylf*, and close variants of stt. 32 and 33 appear in *SnEskáld* amid another prose version of these events. Additionally, chapter 6 of *Norna-Gests þáttr* (*FSN I*) briefly refers to Sigurðr's killing of Fáfnir and seizure of the treasure. As touched on earlier, events recounted in *Fm.* were also popular subjects for depiction in medieval visual art, such as the c. 1030 Ramsung stone-carving from Södermanland, Sweden, and late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century wood-carvings from Hylestad Stave Church, Norway.

Chapters 163–67 of the Old Norse (Norwegian) *Biðreks saga af Bern* give a variant version of the story in which Sigurðr is fostered by a smith called Mímir, whose brother, Reginn, was a fiery dragon. Sigurðr kills Reginn and then Mímir.

Outside Old Norse literature, accounts of fundamentally the same hero's killing of a dragon appear in the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied* (3.100, 16.899–902), the Faroese ballad *Regin smiður* 'Regin the Smith', and the sixteenth-century German *Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid* 'Lay of Horny Seyfried'. The *Nibelungenlied*'s references to the hero's killing of a dragon, whose blood made him almost wholly invulnerable to piercing weapons after he bathed in it, though significant for the narrative, are brief and retrospective. By contrast, the Faroese ballad includes a far more dramatic dragon-slaying scene during which the whole world shakes at the force of the sword-blow struck by the hero, which bisects the worm. Despite its late attestation, the *Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid* is thought to contain ancient elements, and is made more attractive by its series of accompanying woodcut illustrations.

Another important parallel is between *Fm.*'s account of Sigurðr's acquisition of knowledge of bird-language by sucking the finger he accidentally burnt while cooking Fáfnir's heart and, in medieval Irish literature, the acquisition of poetic knowledge by the foremost Fenian hero, Finn mac Cumhaill. Finn acquired this knowledge in a similar way, after burning his thumb when cooking a remarkable salmon.

Synopsis

Prose: Sigurðr and Reginn went to Gnitaheiðr, where the snake Fáfnir was wont to drink. Sigurðr dug a pit, climbed into it, and stabbed Fáfnir from below as the dragon slithered over him. Sigurðr and Fáfnir gazed at each other and started to converse.

Verse: Fáfnir asks for his attacker's identity (1).

Prose: Sigurðr concealed his name to avoid being cursed.

Verse: Sigurðr conceals his identity and lies about having no father or mother (2). Fáfnir ask where he came from, in that case (3). He replies obliquely that his origin is unknown to Fáfnir, but then suddenly reveals his true identity (4). Fáfnir asks who spurred him to kill him (5). Again, Sigurðr conceals the truth by saying that he incited himself (6). Fáfnir accuses him of being a cowardly captive (7), which Sigurðr disputes (8). Fáfnir asserts that the treasure will be Sigurðr's death (9), but death is an eventuality, Sigurðr says, for everyone (10). Fáfnir foretells Sigurðr's demise at the decree of the Nornir (supernatural females who determine people's fate) (11), which prompts Sigurðr to ask for the identity of the Nornir who deliver sons from their mothers at childbirth (12). Fáfnir relates their diverse supernatural origins (13). Sigurðr then asks for the name of the island where the fire-demon Surtr will fight the gods (at Ragnarok) (14). Fáfnir identifies it as Óskópnir, and adds that the heavenly bridge Bifröst will break (15). Fáfnir casts his mind back to when he lay on the treasure and wore a helm of terror (16), which Sigurðr says offers no protection in battle (17). Fáfnir recalls how he used to snort poison (18), and Sigurðr remarks on Fáfnir's hissing, hardness of heart and hatred inspired by the helm (19). Fáfnir advises Sigurðr to ride away without the treasure (20), but Sigurðr disregards this advice (21). Fáfnir warns him about Reginn and anticipates his own death (22).

Prose: Reginn had turned away while Sigurðr slew Fáfnir. He returned when Sigurðr was wiping the blood from his sword. They began to converse.

Verse: Reginn praises Sigurðr as the most courageous man (23), an accolade that Sigurðr side-steps (24). Reginn admits that he himself played a part in the killing (25), and Sigurðr adds that Fáfnir would still be alive if Reginn had not questioned his courage (26).

Prose: Reginn cut out Fáfnir's heart and drank his blood.

Verse: Reginn tells Sigurðr to cook Fáfnir's heart while he sleeps (27), to which Sigurðr replies that Reginn was far away when he was attacking Fáfnir (28). Reginn retorts that Sigurðr would not have killed Fáfnir without the sword that he forged for him (29), but Sigurðr declares he puts more faith in his courage and optimism than a sword's strength (30–31).

Prose: Sigurðr roasted Fáfnir's heart but burnt his finger when testing its tenderness. He immediately put his finger in his mouth and at once understood the chirping of some nearby nuthatches.

Verse: The nuthatches alert Sigurðr to the desirability of eating Fáfnir's heart himself, killing Reginn and keeping all the gold (32–39).

Prose: Sigurðr beheaded Reginn, ate Fáfnir's heart and drank the blood of both.

Verse: The nuthatches urge Sigurðr to take the treasure, marry Gjúki's daughter (Guðrún), and awaken a valkyrie in a hall on Hindarfell (40–44).

Prose: Sigurðr rode into the iron-house where the treasure lay. He loaded a huge amount onto Grani, including the helm of terror, a golden mail-coat and a sword called Hrotti. Grani would not advance until Sigurðr was also on his back.

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Fáfnismál

Sigurðr ok Reginn fóru upp á Gnitaheiði ok hittu þar slóð Fáfnis, þá er hann skreið til vatns. Þar gørði Sigurðr gróf mikla á veginum, ok gekk Sigurðr þar í. En er Fáfnir skreið af gullinu, blés hann eitri, okhraut þat fyr ofan höfuð Sigurði. En er Fáfnir skreið yfir grófna, þá lagði Sigurðr hann með sverði til hjarta. Fáfnir hristi sik ok barði höfði ok sporði. Sigurðr hljóp ór grófinni, ok sá þá hvárr annan. Fáfnir kvað:

Frá dauða Fáfnis

1. 'Sveinn ok sveinn! Hverjum ertu sveini um borinn?
Hverra ertu manna mógr?
Er þú á Fáfni rautt þinn inn frána mæki?
Stóndumk til hjarta hjórr!'

Sigurðr dulði nafns síns, fyr því at þat var trúá þeira í forneskju at orð feigs manns mætti mikit, ef hann bólvaði óvin sínum með nafni. Hann kvað:

2. "'Gofugt dýr" ek heiti, en ek gengit hefk
"inn móðurlausi mógr";
föður ek ákka, sem fira synir,
æ geng ek einn saman.'

3. 'Veiztu, ef föður né áttat, sem fira synir,
af hverju vartu undri alinn?'

4. 'Ætterni mitt, kveð ek, þér ókunnigt vera
ok mik sjálfan it sama;
Sigurðr ek heiti — Sigmundr hét minn faðir —
er hefk þik vápnum vegit!'

5. 'Hverr þik hvatti, hví hvetjask lézt,
mínu fjórvi at fara?
Inn fráneygi sveinn, þú áttir föður bitran —
áburnu skjór á skeið.'

6. 'Hugr mik hvatti, hendr mér fulltýðu
ok minn inn hvassi hjórr;
fár er hvatr, er hrøðask tekr,
ef í barnæsku er blauðr.'

7. 'Veit ek, ef þú vaxa næðir fyr þinna vina brjósti,
sæi maðr þik vreiðan vega;
nú ertu haptr ok hernuminn;
æ kveða bandingja bifask!'

The Sayings of Fáfnir

Sigurðr and Reginn went up to Gnitaheiðr and there they came across Fáfnir's track, when he slithered to water. There Sigurðr made a great pit in the way, and Sigurðr went in there. And when Fáfnir slithered from the gold, he blew poison, and it fell from above on Sigurðr's head. And when Fáfnir slithered over the pit, then Sigurðr pierced him to the heart with a sword. Fáfnir shook himself and lashed with head and tail. Sigurðr leapt from the pit, and each then saw the other. Fáfnir said:

About Fáfnir's Death

1. 'Boy, oh boy(?)! To which boy were you born?
 A son of which men are you?
Is it you [who] reddened in Fáfnir that shining sword of yours?²
 A sword stands at my heart!'

2. 'I am called "noble deer",³ but I have come as
 "the motherless boy";
I have no father, as the sons of men [do],
 always I walk alone.'⁴

- 3.⁵ 'Do you know, if you had no father, as the sons of men [do],
 from what wonder you were born?'

4. 'My origin, I say, is unknown to you
 and I myself the same;
I am called Sigurðr⁶ — my father was called Sigmundr —
 it is I who have slain you with weapons!'

5. 'Who incited you, why did you let yourself be incited,
 to destroy my life?
Shining-eyed boy, you had a bitter father;
 '⁷

6. 'Spirit incited me, hands helped me sufficiently,
 and my sharp sword;
scarcely is one courageous, when one starts to age,
 if in childhood one is cowardly.'

7. 'I know, if you'd managed to grow in the bosom of your friends,
[that] one might have seen you fight angry,⁸
 now you're a captive and taken in war;
they say bound men always shake!'

8. 'Því bregðr þú nú mér, Fáfnir, at til fjarri sják
mínúnum feðrmunum;
eigi em ek haptr, þótt ek væra hernumi —
þú fannt at ek lauss lifl!'
9. 'Heiptyrði ein telr þú þér í hvívetna,
en ek þér satt eitt segik:
it gjalla gull ok it glóðrauða fé,
þér verða þeir baugar at bana!'
10. 'Fé ráða skal fyrða hvern
æ til ins eina dags,
þvíat einu sinni skal alda hvern
fara til Heljar heðan.'
11. 'Norna dóm þú munt fyr nesjum hafa
ok ósvinns apa;
í vatni þú druknar, ef í vindi rør:
allt er feigs forað.'
12. 'Segðu mér, Fáfnir, allz þík fróðan kveða
ok vel mart vita:
hverjar ru þær Nornir er nauðgonglar ru
ok kjósa mœðr frá mögum?'
- Fáfnir* kvað:
13. 'Sundrbornar mjók, hygg ek, at Nornir sé —
eigut þær ætt saman:
sumar eru Áskungar, sumar álfkungar,
sumar dœtr Dvalins.'
- Sigurðr* kvað:
14. 'Segðu mér þat, Fáfnir, allz þík fróðan kveða
ok vel mart vita:
hvé sá hólmr heitir er blanda hjörlegi
Surtr ok Æsir saman.'
- Fáfnir* kvað:
15. 'Óskópnir hann heitir, en þar qll skulu
geirum leika goð;
Bilröst brotnar er þeir á brot fara,
ok svima í móðu marir.'
16. 'Œgishjálm bar ek um alda sonum,
meðan ek um menjum lág;
einn rammari hugðumk qllum vera;
fannka ek marg a mögu!'

8. 'You're throwing this at me, Fáfnir, now that I'm too far from my father's possessions;⁹
I'm not a captive, even if I were a prisoner of war¹⁰ —
you found that I live freely!'
9. 'You hear only hateful words in everything,
but I'm only telling you the truth:
the ringing gold and the glowing red treasure —
those arm-rings will bring about your death!'
10. 'Every person shall preside over treasure,
always, until that one day,
because on one occasion each human must
journey to Hel¹¹ from here.'
11. 'You'll have the Nornir's sentence¹² before headlands
and [that] of an unwise ape;¹³
in water you'll drown, if you row in a wind:
everything is a danger for a doomed man.'
12. 'Tell me, Fáfnir, since they say you're wise
and know many things:
who are those Nornir who come at times of need
and deliver mothers from their sons?¹⁴
- 13.¹⁵ Fáfnir said:
'Of very diverse birth, I think, the Nornir are —
together, they don't have a [single] family;¹⁶
some are of Áss¹⁷-kind, some of elf-kind,
some are daughters of Dvalinn.'¹⁸
14. Sigurðr said:
'Tell me this, Fáfnir, since they say you're wise
and know many things:
what the islet is called where Surtr¹⁹ and the Æsir²⁰
will blend sword-liquid together.'²¹
15. Fáfnir said:
'Óskópnir²² it's called, and there all the gods
shall sport with spears;
Bilröst²³ breaks when they journey away,
and their steeds swim in the mighty river.'
16. 'A helm of terror²⁴ I bore over the sons of men,
while I lay upon torcs;
I thought I alone was stronger than all;
I didn't meet many men!'

17. *Sigurðr kvað:*
 ‘Egishjálmr bergr einugi,
 hvars skulu vreiðir vega;
 þá þat finnr, er með fleirum kómr,
 at engi er einna hvatastr!’

18. *Fáfnir kvað:*
 ‘Eitri ek fnæsta er ek á arfi lá
 miklum míns fóður.’

19. *Sigurðr kvað:*
 ‘Inn fráni ormr, þú gørðir fræs mikla
 ok gatz harðan hug;
 heipt at meiri verðr hlóða sonum,
 at þann hjálm hafi.’

20. *Fáfnir kvað:*
 ‘Ræð ek þér nú, Sigurðr, en þú ráð nemir
 ok ríð heim heðan!
 It gjalla gull ok it glóðrauða fé —
 þér verða þeir baugar at bana!’

21. ‘Ráð er þér ráðit, en ek ríða mun
 til þess gulls er í lyngvi liggr;
 en þú, Fáfnir, ligg í fjörbrotum,
 þar er þik Hel hafi!’

22. ‘Reginn mik réð, hann þik ráða mun —
 hann mun okkr verða báðum at bana!
 Fjor sitt láta hygg ek at Fáfnir myni;
 þitt varð nú meira megin.’

Reginn var á brot horfinn meðan Sigurðr vá Fáfni, ok kom þá aptr er Sigurðr strauk blóð af sverðinu.

23. *Reginn kvað:*
 ‘Heill þú nú, Sigurðr! Nú hefir þú sigr vegit
 ok Fáfni um farit!
 Manna þeira er mold troða,
 þik kveð ek óblauðastan alinn!’

24. ‘Þat er óvist at vita, þá er komum allir saman,
 sigtíva synir,
 hvern óblauðastr er alinn;
 margr er sá hvatr er hjor né rýðr
 annars brjóstum í.’

Reginn had turned away while Sigurðr was killing Fáfnir, and then he came back when Sigurðr was wiping blood from the sword.

23. Reginn said:
'Hail now, Sigurðr! Now you have secured victory through fighting
and finished Fáfnir!
Of those men who tread the earth,
you, I declare, were born the least cowardly!'

24. 'It's hard to know for certain, when we all come together,
the sons of the victory-gods,
who is born the least cowardly;
there's many a brave man who doesn't reddens his sword
in another's breast.'

25. 'Glaðr ertu nú, Sigurðr, ok gagni feginn,
er þú þerrir Gram á grasi;
bróður minn hefir þú benjaðan,
ok veld ek þó sjálf� sumu.'

26. 'Þú því rétt, er ek ríða skyldak
heilög fjöll hinig;
fé ok fjörvi réði sá inn fráni ormr,
nema þú frýðir mér hvats hugar.'

Þá gekk Reginn at Fáfni ok skar hjarta ór honum með sverði er Riðill heitir, ok þá drakk hann blóð ór undinni eptir.

27. 'Sittu nú, Sigurðr, en ek mun sofa ganga,
ok halt Fáfnis hjarta við funa!
Eiskold ek vil etin láta
eptir þenna dreyra drykk.'

Sigurðr kvað:
28. 'Fjarri þú gekkt, meðan ek á Fáfni rauðk
minn inn hvassa hjør;
aflí mínu atta ek við orms megin,
meðan þú í lyngvi látt!'

Reginn kvað:
29. 'Lengi liggja léтир þú þann lyngvi í,
inn aldna jötun,
ef þú sverðs né nytir, þess er ek sjálfur gørða,
ok þíns ins hvassa hjors!'

Sigurðr kvað:
30. 'Hugr er betri en sé hjors megin,
hvars vreiðir skulu vega;
þvíat hvatan mann ek sé harliga vega
með slævu sverði sigr.'

31. 'Hvøtum er betra en sé óhvøtum,
í hildileik hafask;
gløðum er betra en sé glúpnanda,
hvat sem at hendi kømr.'

Sigurðr tók Fáfnis hjarta ok steikði á teini. Er hann hugði at fullsteikt væri, ok freyddi sveitinn ór hjartanu, þá tók hann á fingri sínum ok skynjaði hvárt fullsteikt væri. Hann brann ok brá fingrinum í munn sér. En er hjartblóð Fáfnis kom á tungu honum, ok skilði hann fuglsrødd. Hann heyrði at igður klokuðu á hrísinum. Igðan kvað:

25. 'You're glad now, Sigurðr, and delighted with your gains,
as you dry Gramr³³ on the grass;
you've wounded my brother mortally,
and yet I myself played some part.'

26. 'You advised this, that I should ride
here over holy mountains;
the shining snake would [still] command treasure and life,
if you hadn't questioned my courage.'

Then Reginn went to Fáfnir and cut the heart from him with a sword that was called Riðill,³⁴ and then he drank blood from the wound afterwards.

27. 'Sit now, Sigurðr, and I shall go to sleep,
and you hold Fáfnir's heart by the fire!
I want to eat the heart³⁵
after a drink of this blood.'

Sigurðr said:
28. 'You went far [away], while in Fáfnir I reddened
my sharp sword;
I pitted³⁶ my strength against the snake's might,
while you lay in the ling!'

Reginn said:
29. 'Long you'd have left him lying in the ling,
that ancient giant,³⁷
if you didn't make use of the sword that I myself made,
and that sharp blade of yours!'

Sigurðr said:
30. 'Courage is better than a sword's strength,
wherever wrathful ones shall fight;
because I see a bold one harshly securing victory
[even] with a blunt sword.'

31. 'It's better for the keen³⁸ than it is for the unkeen,
to bring themselves into battle-play,³⁹
it's better for the happy than it is for those losing heart,
whatever comes to hand.'⁴⁰

Sigurðr took Fáfnir's heart and roasted it on a spit. When he thought that it was fully roasted, and the blood was foaming from the heart, then he touched it with his finger and tested whether it was fully roasted. He burnt [himself] and quickly put the finger in his mouth. And when Fáfnir's heart-blood came onto his tongue, he also understood bird-language. He heard that nuthatches⁴¹ were twittering in the bushes. The nuthatch⁴² said:

32. 'Par sitr Sigurðr, sveita stokkinn,
Fáfnis hjarta við funa steikir;
spakr þötti mér spillir bauga,
ef hann fjørsega fránan æti!'
33. 'Par liggr Reginn, ræðr um við sik,
vill tæla móg, þann er trúir honum;
berr af reiði röng orð saman,
vill bølva smiðr bróður hefna!'
34. 'Höfði skemmra láti hann inn hára þul
fara til Heljar heðan!
Qllu gulli þá kná hann einn ráða,
fjöld, því er und Fáfni lá.'
35. 'Horskr þötti mér, ef hafa kynni
ástráð mikit yðvar systra,
hygði hann um sik ok Hugin gleddi;
þar er mér úlfs vón er ek eyru sék!'
36. 'Erat svá horskr hildimeiðr,
sem ek hers jaðar hyggja myndak,
ef hann bróður lætr á brot komask,
en hann զðrum hefr aldrs of synjat!'
37. 'Mjök er ósviðr, ef hann enn sparir
fjánda inn fólkská,
þar er Reginn liggr, er hann ráðinn hefr;
kannat hann við slíku at sjá!'
38. 'Höfði skemmra láti hann þann inn hrímkalda jötun,
ok af baugum búa;
þá mundu fjár, þess er Fáfnir réð,
einvaldi vera!'
39. 'Verðrat svá rík skop at Reginn skyli
mitt banorð bera,
þvíat þeir báðir brœðr skulu brálliga
fara til Heljar heðan!'
- Sigurðr hjó hófuð af Regin ok þá át hann Fáfnis hjarta ok drakk blóð þeira beggja, Regins ok Fáfnis. Þá heyrði Sigurðr hvar igður mæltu:
40. 'Bitt þú, Sigurðr, bauga rauða,
era konungligt kvíða mórgu!
Mey veit ek eina, myklu fegrsta,
gulli goedda, ef þú geta mættir!'

- 32.⁴³ 'There sits Sigurðr, splattered with blood,
cooking Fáfnir's heart by the fire;
the spoiler of rings⁴⁴ would seem to me wise,
if he ate the shining life-slice!'⁴⁵
- 33.⁴⁶ 'There lies Reginn, deliberating with himself,
he wants to deceive the young man, the one who trusts in him;
out of wrath he draws wrong words together,
the smith of afflictions wants to avenge his brother!'
34. 'Shorter by a head⁴⁷ he⁴⁸ should make⁴⁹ the hoary sage
journey to Hel from here!
Then he alone can rule all the gold,
an abundance, that which lay under Fáfnir.'
35. 'Astute he'd seem to me, if he knew how to take
the great loving advice of you sisters,
[if] he thought about himself and gladdened Huginn;⁵⁰
I expect a wolf⁵¹ when I see its ears!'⁵²
36. 'The battle-tree⁵³ isn't as astute
as I'd have thought an army's protector [should be],
if he lets [one] brother⁵⁴ get away,
but has denied the other old age!'⁵⁵
37. 'He's very unwise, if still he spares
the army-crushing enemy,⁵⁶
there where Reginn lies, who has betrayed him;
he doesn't know how to guard himself against such!'
38. 'Shorter by a head he should make that rime-cold giant,⁵⁷
and [make him] dwell [far] from arm-rings,⁵⁸
then he'd be sole controller of the treasure,
of that which Fáfnir ruled!'
- 39.⁵⁹ 'Fate won't become so powerful that Reginn shall
bring word of my death,⁶⁰
because both those brothers shall swiftly
journey to Hel from here!'
- Sigurðr cut off Reginn's head and then he ate Fáfnir's heart and drank the blood of them both, Reginn and Fáfnir. Then Sigurðr heard how the nuthatches said:⁶¹
40. 'Bind [up],⁶² Sigurðr, red arm-rings,⁶³
it's not kingly to fear much!
I know a maiden, the fairest by far,
endowed with gold, if you could [only] get her!'

41. 'Liggja til Gjúka grænar brautir,
fram vísa skop fólkliðqndum;
þar hefir dýrr konungr dóttur alna —
þá mundu, Sigurðr, mundi kaupa.
42. 'Salr er á há Hindarfjalli,
allr er hann útan eldi sveipinn;
þann hafa horskr halir um górvan
ór ódøkkum Ógnar ljóma.
43. 'Veit ek á fjalli fólkvitr sofa,
ok leikr yfir lindar váði;
Yggr stakk þorni: aðra feldi
hør-Gefn hali, en hafa vildi.
44. 'Knáttu, mógr, sjá mey und hjálmi,
þá er frá vígi Vingskorni reið;
máat Sigdrífar svefni bregða,
Skjoldunga niðr, fyr skopum Norna!'

Sigurðr reið eptir slóð Fáfnis til bœlis hans ok fann þat opit, ok hurðir af járni ok gætti; af járni váru ok allir timbrstokkar í húsinu, en grafit í jörð niðr. Þar fann Sigurðr stórmikit gull ok fyldi þar tvær kistur. Þar tók hann ægishjálm ok gullbrynju ok sverðit Hrotta ok marga dýrgripi, ok klyfjaði þar með Grana. En hestrinn vildi eigi fram ganga fyrr en Sigurðr steig á bak honum.

41. 'Green ways lead to Gjúki's,
fates show [the way] forward for folk-wandering ones,⁶⁴
there the worthy⁶⁵ king has brought up a daughter⁶⁶ —
you will buy that one, Sigurðr, for a bride-price.⁶⁷
42. 'There's a hall on high Hindarfjall,⁶⁸
it's all swathed in fire round the outside;
wise men have made it
from the undark light of Ógn.⁶⁹
43. 'I know a battle-being sleeps on the fell,
and the linden's destruction⁷⁰ plays over her;
Yggr⁷¹ pierced her with a thorn:⁷² the flax-Gefn⁷³
felled men other than [those] he wanted to have.⁷⁴
44. 'You, young man, can see the maiden beneath the helm,
the one who rode from battle on Vingskornir,⁷⁵
one cannot break Sigrdrífa's⁷⁶ sleep,
kinsman of the Skjoldungar,⁷⁷ before the decrees of the Nornir!⁷⁸

Sigurðr rode along Fáfnir's track to his lair and found it open, and the doors were of iron, as were the door-frames; also of iron were all the posts in the house, and [they were] buried down in the earth. There Sigurðr found a vast amount of gold and he filled there two chests. There he took a helm of terror and a golden mail-coat and the sword Hrotti⁷⁹ and many precious treasures, and he loaded Grani with them. But the horse would not go forward until Sigurðr climbed on his back.

Textual Apparatus to *Fáfnismál*

Fáfnismál] This title is not in R; it is supplied from later, paper manuscripts. There is no division in R between the prose that concludes *Rm.* in this edition and the prose that begins *Fm.* in this edition.

Frá dauða Fáfnis] This rubricated but faded heading is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this edition therefore relies on its (partly bracketed) transcription

Sveinn] The first letter is large and red, but faded, in R

2/6 *æ*] R absent

7/2 *þinna*] R *þi*No

7/3 *sæi*] R *sætt*

7/3 *vreiðan*] R *reidan*

13–20 speech directions] The speakers' names are missing from the left-hand margin in R, having been cut away; *qvað* (*kvað*) is abbreviated *q* each time. There is an additional speech direction for the second half of st. 17, which seems redundant or erroneous (the corresponding words in VS 18 are all spoken by Sigurðr).

17/1 *Œgishjálmr*] R *Œgis hialm*

17/3 *hvars*] R *hvar*

17/3 *vreiðir*] R *reipir*

19/1 *fráni*] R *rammi* 'powerful' (the emendation supplies alliteration; cf. *inn fráni ormr* in st. 26)

24/6 *rýðr*] R *ryfr*

30/3 *vreiðir*] R *reidir*

39/1 *Verðrat*] R *Verþa*

43/8 *en*] R *er*

44/4 *Vingskorni*] R *ving scornir*

44 pr. *á*] R *af* 'from'

Notes to the Translation

- 1 A conjectural interpretation of words that mean literally 'boy and boy'.
- 2 Or 'It is you who reddened that shining sword of yours in Fáfnir'.
- 3 Or 'noble animal'.
- 4 Alternatively, *geng ek æ einn saman* 'I walk always alone'; the addition of *æ* 'always' appears necessary for the metre, but in VS 18 Sigurðr simply says *einn saman hefi ek farit* 'alone I have journeyed'.
- 5 This stanza is spoken by Fáfnir.
- 6 Sigurðr's sudden revelation of his true identity is puzzling; there may be some textual corruption, especially as the present length of st. 3 might suggest the omission of at least

- half a stanza. In VS 18, Sigurðr's stating of his real name is explained by Fáfnir's assertion that *veitztu at þú lýgr nú* 'you know that you're lying now'.
- 7 The last line of this stanza (*áburnu skjór á skeið*), which may well be corrupt, is not translated because its meaning is so uncertain. Among the possibilities, however, is 'inborn quality shows in due course'.
 - 8 For the Old Norse line to alliterate, it requires an East Norse or preliterary West Norse form of *reiðr*, namely **vreiðr*; cf. *Fm.* 17, 30; *Ls.* 15, 18. 27; *Sd.* 27.
 - 9 Or 'father's love/care'.
 - 10 VS 12 records that, after Sigmundr's death in battle, Hjordís, while pregnant with Sigurðr, was taken to King Álfr's court, where she stayed in the guise of a serving woman until her true status became known.
 - 11 The underworld land of the dead, or the supernatural female who ruled it.
 - 12 I.e., death, as appointed by the Nornir. Cf. *Hm.* 30.
 - 13 I.e., a fool.
 - 14 I.e., enable childbirth.
 - 15 *SnEGylf* (15, p. 18; see also *SnEUpp* 14, p. 30) quotes a close variant of this stanza; variant readings include *segi* 'I say' for *hygg* 'I think'.
 - 16 Literally, 'a family together'.
 - 17 I.e., divine. The *Æsir* (sg., *Áss*) were the gods, sometimes specifically the tribe led by Óðinn (as distinct from the Vanir).
 - 18 A famous dwarf. His name is interpretable as 'Delayed One'.
 - 19 'Black One', an apocalyptic fire-demon.
 - 20 Or 'the gods'.
 - 21 Blood ('sword-liquid') from the wounds of Surtr and the gods will mix when they fight each other at Ragnarok.
 - 22 'Unshapen' (i.e., 'Not Created'); perhaps it would be created only shortly before the battle.
 - 23 'Momentary League', the bridge to heaven, which is probably a rainbow.
 - 24 This helmet is interpretable both as an object that Fáfnir wore (see the concluding prose) and as a metaphor for the overwhelming fear he inspired in people.
 - 25 Cf. *Háv.* 64.
 - 26 I.e., the golden treasure.
 - 27 Or 'for'.
 - 28 Cf. *Háv.* 112 *et seq.*, in which Óðinn advises a certain Loddfáfnir.
 - 29 I.e., 'You have given advice'.
 - 30 Heather.
 - 31 Or 'life-breakings', i.e., death-throes.
 - 32 Fáfnir plays on two senses of the verb *ráða*: 'to betray, deceive' (someone in the acc.) and 'to advise' (someone in the dat.).
 - 33 Sigurðr's sword.
 - 34 Possibly 'Swinger'.
 - 35 Literally, 'I want to let the heart be eaten'.

- 36 Literally, 'etched'.
- 37 Fáfnir. Cf. *Vsp.* 48.
- 38 Or 'bold', 'brave'.
- 39 Battle.
- 40 I.e., 'whatever happens'.
- 41 Or perhaps titmice or tits.
- 42 I.e., the first one. VS 20 has six, and this edition apportions stt. 32–38 accordingly.
- 43 *SnESkáld* (I, 40, p. 47) has a close variant of this stanza.
- 44 A kenning for a 'prince' as a bestower of wealth in the form of broken-up arm-rings.
- 45 Fáfnir's heart.
- 46 *SnESkáld* (I, 40, p. 47) has a close variant of this stanza.
- 47 I.e., headless.
- 48 Sigurðr.
- 49 Literally, 'let'.
- 50 One of Óðinn's ravens. Ravens are gladdened by fallen men, whose corpses they devour.
- 51 Literally, 'There is to me expectation of a wolf'.
- 52 Proverbial.
- 53 A poetic term for a warrior, here Sigurðr.
- 54 I.e., Reginn.
- 55 I.e., when he has killed the other brother, Fáfnir.
- 56 Reginn.
- 57 An interesting designation, given that Reginn was described in *Rm.*'s initial prose as a *dvergr* 'dwarf' in stature. His brother, Fáfnir, is also a *jotunn* '(devouring) giant' in *Fm.* 29.
- 58 I.e., in Hel.
- 59 Sigurðr speaks this stanza.
- 60 I.e., kill Sigurðr. The literal sense is 'bear my death-word'.
- 61 For simplicity's sake, this edition assumes that the nuthatches speak the following five stanzas in unison.
- 62 I.e., bind them on a thread or chain.
- 63 Presumably from the treasure.
- 64 I.e., travellers; alternatively, 'warlike seafarers' or 'those who walk through hosts' (i.e., outstanding warriors).
- 65 Literally, 'dear' (i.e., costly, precious).
- 66 Guðrún.
- 67 I.e., Sigurðr will become engaged to her by making a payment, the 'bride-price'.
- 68 'Hind's Fell'.
- 69 Probably a kenning for 'gold'; Ógn 'Terror' seems to be the name of a river.
- 70 A kenning for 'fire', which destroys trees.
- 71 'Terrible One', an alias of Óðinn.
- 72 A magical thorn that induced sleep.

- 73 Or 'linen-Gefn'. *Gefn* 'Giver', the name of a goddess, appears here in a term for a valkyrie.
- 74 The task of Óðinn's valkyries was to bring him the fallen warriors whom he had chosen. This valkyrie disobeyed his wishes. Cf. *Hlr.* 8 and *Sd.* 4 pr.; also VS 21.
- 75 A horse. The name might mean 'Swinging Eagle'.
- 76 'Victory Driver' or perhaps 'Victory Snowdrift', as also in the prose of *Sd.* Cf. *Grp.* 15–17, where the valkyrie is unnamed, and VS 20, where she is called *Brynhildr*. Possibly *Sigrdrífa* is (or was originally) just an epithet of, or a poetic term for, a valkyrie, rather than a personal name, but the original relationship between 'Sigrdrífa' and *Brynhildr* is a matter of debate.
- 77 The 'Shieldings', a Danish dynasty.
- 78 The precise meaning of the second half of this stanza is disputed.
- 79 *Hrotti* appears related to OE *Hrunting* 'Tree-Stump Offshoot(?)', the name of a renowned sword which the hero of *Beowulf* borrowed.

Sigrdrífumál

The title *Sigrdrífumál* (*Sd.*) ‘The Sayings of Sigrdrífa’ is not found in **R**, but supplied editorially, following modern convention. The distinction between *Fm.* and *Sd.* is itself an editorial intervention, made on the basis of later, paper manuscripts. Some of these have a different title for *Sd.*: *Brynhildarkviða Buðladóttur in fyrsta* ‘The First Poem of Brynhildr, Buðli’s Daughter’.

The text of *Sd.* is incomplete in **R** (fol. 31v–32v), due to the loss of a gathering: it ends amid st. 29. Fortunately, paper manuscripts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries preserve the rest of the poem, the full text having apparently been copied before the loss occurred. Additionally, the second half of st. 8 is supplied from *VS* 21. A version of *Sd.* was obviously a source for *VS*, as the same chapter also quotes stt. 5–13 and 15–21, albeit in a different order and with some significant variants, in its corresponding description of the meeting of Sigurðr and the valkyrie Brynhildr. *Brynhildr* is the saga’s name for the valkyrie called *Sigrdrífa* in the prose following st. 4 of *Sd.*¹ *Hlr.* may also identify the two figures. The basis of the equation is uncertain, however.

Sd. is another *prosimetrum*, possibly stitched together from different sources. Its verses, comprising the words exchanged by Sigurðr and Sigrdrífa, are mostly in the usual Eddic metre for wisdom dialogue, *ljóðaháttir*. There are, however, also instances of *fornyrðislag* and *galdralag*.

After some arresting opening stanzas, in which Sigrdrífa awakens from a magically induced sleep induced by Óðinn and addresses gods and goddesses, she identifies the different types of rune-magic that Sigurðr must know, albeit with few specifics about the actual runes. These details are possibly contained within the magical beer that she brings him, which represents another manifestation of the theme (also present in *Vsp.*, *Háv.*, *Vm.*, *Grm.*, *Fm.* and *Hdl.*) of the acquisition, retention or revelation of knowledge by imbibing liquid, and which presumably reflects the belief of a largely illiterate society that knowledge, principally released from the mouth as speech (enabled by saliva and sometimes projected with it), was acquired through the mouth in the form of a liquid. Sigrdrífa also describes the Óðinnic origin of certain runes in an otherwise unknown episode, and confers more general advice in a manner similar to *Háv.*

¹ *Sigrdrífa* does not appear as a name in the verses of *Sd.* It appears in verse only in *Fm.* 44.

As John McKinnell has observed, structural and verbal correspondences to the second half of *Háv.* raise the possibility of influence by *Háv.*, in which case *Sd.* may be a relatively late composition.² With this possible relationship may be compared the potential echo of *Háv.* 112 (*et seq.*) in *Fm.* 20, as well as the broad parallels between *Fm.* and both *Vm.* and *Grm.*, the wisdom poems which follow *Háv.* in **R.**

Events described in *Sd.* are touched on in *Grp.*, *Fm.* and *Hlr.* They are also treated in prose and verse in VS 21–22, and briefly in prose in *SnESkáld* (I, 41, p. 47) and chapter 6 of *Norna-Gests þáttr*.

Comparison may also be made with the Faroese ballad *Brynhildar tåttur* ‘Brynhild’s Story’.

Synopsis

Prose: Sigurðr rode up to Hindarfjall where he saw a light shining up to the sky and then, as he approached it, a stronghold. He went inside the stronghold and saw an armoured man lying there. He removed the man’s helmet and saw that it was actually a woman. He cut off her mail-coat with his sword, whereupon she awoke and spoke to him.

Verse: She asks what cut through her mail-coat, why she has awoken, and who freed her. Sigurðr tells her (1). She reveals that she has slept long, due to the magic of the god Óðinn (2).

Prose: Sigurðr sat down and asked her name. She gave him a drink to strengthen his memory.

Verse: She greets the personified day, night and earth, as well as the gods and goddesses. She requests their favour for herself and for Sigurðr (3–4).

Prose: She named herself Sigrdrífa. She was a valkyrie who had disobeyed Óðinn’s command by killing a king called Hjálm-Gunnarr in battle. Óðinn punished her by piercing her with a magical thorn which sent her to sleep, and said, in addition, that she would never again win victory in battle and that she would marry. She replied that she had vowed to marry no man who knew fear. Sigurðr asks her to teach him wisdom.

Verse: After bringing Sigurðr a magically beneficial drink (5), Sigrdrífa lists the runes that he needs to know, along with details of their purpose and use: victory-runes (6); ale-runes (7–8); protection-runes (for women in childbirth) (9); surf-runes (10); limb-runes (11); speech-runes (12); mind-runes, which originated from Óðinn (13). Óðinn

2 J. McKinnell, *Meeting the Other in Norse Myth and Legend* (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 210–13.

(probably), we learn, once stood on a cliff with a sword, when Mímr's head spoke wisdom (14), apparently concerning the many different things on which runes were (or should be) carved (15–17), and their dispersion, within mead, among gods, elves and humans (18). Sigurðr is then urged to use these runes, if he learns them (19), and to decide whether to speak or remain silent (20). He declares that he will not flee as he knows no cowardice, and that he wants all of Sigdrífa's advice (21). She advises him to be blameless toward his kin (22); to avoid breaking oaths (23); to avoid disputing with fools at assemblies (24); to answer when spoken to, and postpone revenge until an opportune moment (25); to avoid staying with a witch (26); to be watchful when men fight and to beware of evil women at roadsides (27); to avoid fixating on dowries and luring women for kissing (28); to avoid disputing when drunk (29); to remember that the combination of song and ale is often a source of misery (30); to fight, if he has to, rather than be burned alive inside a house (31); to guard against evil and deceit, and avoid seducing women (32); to bury corpses (33); to prepare the dead for the coffin (34); to distrust a criminal's son (35); to remember that lawsuits and hatreds never sleep, so intelligence and weapons are necessary to get ahead in life (36); to guard against evil in every way, as strong dissensions have arisen (37).

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Sigrdrífumál

Sigurðr reið upp á Hindarfjall ok stefndi suðr til Frakklands. Á fjallinu sá hann ljós mikit, svá sem eldr brynni, ok ljómaði af til himins. En er hann kom at, þá stóð þar skjaldborg ok upp ór merki. Sigurðr gekk í skjaldborgina ok sá at þar lá maðr ok svaf með öllum hervápnum. Hann tók fyrst hjálminn af hófði honum. Þá sá hann at þat var kona. Brynjan var fóst, sem hon væri holdgróin. Þá reist hann með Gram frá hófuðsmátt brynjuna í gögnum niðr, ok svá út í gögnum báðar ermar. Þá tók hann brynu af henni, en hon vaknaði, ok settisk hon upp ok sá Sigurðr ok mælti:

1. 'Hvat beit brynu? Hví brá ek svefni?
Hverr feldi af mér fólvar nauðir?'

Hann svaraði:
'Sigmundar burr — sleit fyr skómmu
hrafns hrælundir hjørr Sigurðar.'

2. 'Lengi ek svaf, lengi ek sofnuð var,
løng eru lýða læ;
Óðinn því veldr, er ek eigi máttak
bregða blunnstófum.'

Sigurðr settisk niðr ok spyrr hana nafns. Hon tók þá horn fullt mjaðar ok gaf honum minnisveig.

3. 'Heill, Dagr! Heilir, Dags synir!
Heil, Nótt ok nipt!
Óreiðum augum lítið okkr þinig,
ok gefið sitjondum sigr!'

4. 'Heilir, Æsir! Heilar, Ásynjur!
Heil, sjá in fjolnýta fold!
Mál ok manvit gefið okkr mærum tveim,
ok lækñishendr meðan lifum!'

Hon nefndisk Sigrdrífa, ok var valkyrja. Hon sagði at tveir konungar börðusk. Hét annarr Hjálm-Gunnarr. Hann var þá gamall ok inn mesti hermaðr, ok hafði Óðinn honum sigri heitit. En annarr hét Agnarr, Hauðu bróðir, er vætr engi vildi þiggja. Sigrdrífa feldi Hjálm-Gunnar í orrostunni. En Óðinn stakk hana svefnþorni í hefnd þess ok kvað hana aldri skyldu síðan sigr vega í orrostu ok kvað hana giptask skyldu. 'En ek sagðak honum at ek strengðak heit þar í móti, at giptask øngum þeim manni er hræðask kynni.'

Hann segir ok biðr hana kenna sér speki, ef hon vissi tíðindi ór öllum heimum.

The Sayings of Sigrdrífa

Sigurðr rode up to Hindarfjall¹ and headed south to Frakkland.² On the fell he saw a great light, as if a fire were burning, and it shone up to the sky. But when he came there, then a shield-stronghold³ stood there and above it a standard. Sigurðr went into the shield-stronghold and saw that a man lay there and was sleeping with all war-weapons. First he took the helm from his⁴ head. Then he saw that it was a woman. The mail-coat was stuck fast, as if it were flesh-grown. Then he cut through with Gramr⁵ from the head-opening of the mail-coat downwards, and so out through both sleeves. Then he took the mail-coat off her; and she awoke, and she sat herself up and saw Sigurðr and said:

1. ‘What bit the mail-coat? Why have I shaken off sleep?
Who caused the pale constraints⁶ to fall from me?’

He answered:⁷

‘Sigmundr’s son — a short time ago
Sigurðr’s sword slit a raven’s corpse-morsels.’⁸

2. ‘Long I slept, long was I asleep,
long are the misfortunes of men;
Óðinn caused this, that I couldn’t
shake off sleep-staves.’⁹

Sigurðr sat himself down and asked her name. She then took a horn full of mead and gave him a memory-drink.¹⁰

- 3.¹¹ ‘Hail, Dagr!¹² Hail, Dagr’s sons!¹³
Hail, Nótt¹⁴ and her kinswoman!¹⁵
Look upon us both here with un wrathful eyes,
and give victory to those sitting [here]!’

4. ‘Hail, Æsir!¹⁶ Hail, Ásynjur!¹⁷
Hail, the multiply-helpful earth!
Give eloquence and commonsense to us two glorious ones,
and healing hands as long as we live!’

She named herself Sigrdrífa,¹⁸ and she was a valkyrie. She said that two kings had fought each other. One was called Hjálm-Gunnarr.¹⁹ He was by then old and the greatest warrior, and Óðinn had promised him victory. And the other was called Agnarr, Hauða’s²⁰ brother, whom no one wanted to receive.²¹ Sigrdrífa felled Hjálm-Gunnarr in the battle. But Óðinn pierced her with a sleep-thorn in revenge for this and told her that she would never win victory in battle thereafter and said that she would marry. ‘But I said to him that I had sworn an oath to the contrary, to marry no man who could be afraid.’²²

He²³ speaks and asks her to teach him wisdom, if she knew tidings from all worlds.

- Sigrdrífa kvað:
5. 'Bjór fœri ek þér, brynbings apaldr,
magni blandinn ok megintíri;
fullr er hann ljóða ok líknstafa,
góðra galdrar ok gamanrúna!
6. 'Sigrúnar þú skalt rísta ef þú vilt sigr hafa,
ok rísta á hjalti hjors,
sumar á véttrum, sumar á valbostum,
ok nefna tysvar Tý.
7. 'Qlrúnar skaltu kunna ef þú vill annars kvæn
vélit þik í tryggð, ef þú trúir;
á horni skal þær rísta ok á handar baki
ok merkja á nagli Nauð.
8. 'Full skal signa ok við fári sjá,
ok verpa lauki í lög:
*þá ek þat veit, at þér verðr aldri
meinblandinn mjøðr.*
9. 'Bjargrúnar skaltu kunna ef þú bjarga vilt
ok leysa kind frá konum;
á lófa þær skal rísta ok of liðu spenna,
ok biðja þá dísir duga.
10. 'Brimrúnar skaltu rísta ef þú vilt borgit hafa
á sundi seglmörom;
á stafni skal rísta ok á stjórnar blaði
ok leggja eld í ár;
era svá brattr breki, né svá blár unnir,
þó kómzu heill af hafi.
11. 'Limrúnar skaltu kunna ef þú vilt læknir vera
ok kunna sár at sjá;
á berki skal þær rísta ok á baðmi viðar,
þeim er lúta austr limar.
12. 'Málrúnar skaltu kunna ef þú vilt at mangi þér
heiptum gjaldi harm;
þær um vindr, þær um vefr,
þær um setr allar saman,
á því þingi, er þjóðir skulu
í fulla dóma fara.

Sigdrifa said:

5.²⁴ 'I bring you beer, apple-tree of the mail-coat-assembly,²⁵
mixed with might and great glory;
it's full of spells and helpful staves,²⁶
good incantations and pleasure-runes!²⁷

6.²⁸ 'Victory-runes you must inscribe²⁹ if you want to have victory,
and inscribe them on a sword's hilt,
some on the battle-boards(?), some on the slaughter-cords(?),³⁰
and name Týr³¹ twice.

7.³² 'Ale-runes³³ you must know if you desire that another's wife
shouldn't betray you, if you trust [her];
on a horn one must carve them and on the back of the hand
and mark Nauðr³⁴ on the nail.

8.³⁵ 'A full goblet one must sign³⁶ and guard against mischief,
and throw leek³⁷ into the liquid:
then I know it, that never for you
will mead be mixed with harm.

9.³⁸ 'Protection-runes you must know if you want to protect
and loosen children from women,³⁹
on the palms one must carve them⁴⁰ and clasp them around the limbs,⁴¹
and then ask the *disir*⁴² to do good.⁴³

10.⁴⁴ 'Surf-runes you must carve if you want to have protected
sail-steeds⁴⁵ at sea;
on the stem one must carve them and on the rudder's blade,
and burn them into the oar,⁴⁶
the breaker isn't so high, nor the waves so dark-blue,⁴⁷
that you won't come safe from the sea.

11.⁴⁸ 'Limb⁴⁹-runes you must know if you want to be a healer
and to know how to look at wounds;
on bark one must cut them and on a tree of the wood,
one whose limbs incline eastward.

12.⁵⁰ 'Speech-runes you must know if you desire that no one
should repay you for a harm with hateful deeds;
one winds them, one weaves them,
one sets them all together,
at the assembly, when people must proceed
into full courts of justice.

13. 'Hugrúnar skaltu kunna ef þú vilt hverjum vera
 geðsvinnari guma;
 þær of réð, þær of reist,
 þær um hugði Hropti,
 af þeim legi er lekit hafði
 ór hausi Heiðdraupnis
 ok ór horni Hoddrofnis.
14. 'Á bjargi stóð með Brimis eggjar,
 hafði sér á hofði hjálm;
 þá mælti Míms hofuð
 fróðlikt it fyrsta orð
 ok sagði sanna stafi.
15. 'Á skildi, kvað, ristnar, þeim er stendr fyr skínanda goði,
 á eyra Árvakrs ok á Alsvinns hófi,
 á því hvéli er snýsk undir reið Rungnis,
 á Sleipnis tønnum ok á sleða fjötrum,
16. 'á bjarnar hrammi ok á Braga tungu,
 á úlfss klóm ok á arnar nefi,
 á blóðgum vængjum ok á brúar sporði,
 á lausnar lófa ok á líknar spori,
17. 'á gleri ok á gulli ok á gumna heillum,
 í víni ok virtri ok vilisessi,
 á Gungnis oddi ok á Grana brjósti,
 á Nornar nagli ok á nefi uglu.
18. 'Allar váru af skafnar, þær er váru á ristnar,
 ok hverfðar við irn helga mjóð,
 ok sendar á víða vega;
 þær ru með Ásum, þær ru með álfum,
 sumar með vísum Vönum,
 sumar hafa mennskir menn.
19. 'Þat eru bókrúnar, þat eru bjargrúnar,
 ok allar qlírúnar,
 ok mætar meginrúnar,
 hveim er þær kná óviltar ok óspilltar
 sér at heillum hafa;
 njóttu, ef þú namt,
 unz rjúfask regin!

- 13.⁵¹ 'Mind-runes you must know if you want to be
of wiser mind than any [other] man;
he⁵² read them, he carved them,
Hropr⁵³ thought them up,
from the liquid which had leaked
from Heiðdraupnir's skull⁵⁴
and from Hoddrofnir's horn.⁵⁵
14. 'On a cliff he⁵⁶ stood with Brimir's edges,⁵⁷
he had a helmet on his head;
then Mímr's head⁵⁸ spoke
wisely the first word
and said true staves.⁵⁹
- 15.⁶⁰ 'On a shield, he⁶¹ said, [runes were] carved,⁶² the one which stands
before the shining god,⁶³
on Árvakr's ear and on Alsvinnr's hoof,⁶⁴
on the wheel which turns under Rungnir's chariot,⁶⁵
on Sleipnir's teeth⁶⁶ and on a sledge's fitters,⁶⁷
- 16.⁶⁸ 'on a bear's paw and on Bragi's tongue,⁶⁹
on a wolf's claws and on an eagle's beak,
on bloody wings⁷⁰ and on a bridge's fish-tail,⁷¹
on a midwife's palm⁷² and on a helper's footprint,⁷³
- 17.⁷⁴ 'on glass and on gold and on men's amulets,
in wine and wort⁷⁵ and a favoured seat,
on Gungnir's point⁷⁶ and on Grani's breast,⁷⁷
on a Norn's nail and on an owl's nose.⁷⁸
- 18.⁷⁹ 'All were scraped off, those which were carved on,
and mixed with the holy mead,
and sent on wide ways;
they are with Æsir, they are with elves,
some with wise Vanir,
some human beings have.
- 19.⁸⁰ 'Those are book-runes,⁸¹ those are protection-runes,
and all ale-runes,
and worthy might-runes,
for anyone who can have them, unconfused and unspoilt,
for himself as amulets;
use [them], if you learn them [them],
until the powers are ripped apart!⁸²

20. 'Nú skaltu kjósa, allz þér er kostr um boðinn,
hvassa vápna hlynur:
søgn eða þogn — hafðu þér sjálfur í hug!
Qll eru mein of metin.'
21. 'Munka ek flœja, þótt mik feigan vitir,
emka ek með bleyði borinn;
ástráð þín ek vil qll hafa,
svá lengi sem ek lifi!'
22. 'Pat ræð ek þér it fyrsta, at þú við frœndr þína
vammalaust verir;
síðr þú hefnir, þótt þeir sakar gøri —
þat, kveða, dauðum duga.
23. 'Pat ræð ek þér annat, at þú eið né sverir,
nema þann er saðr sé;
grimmir símar ganga at tryggðrofi;
armr er vára vargr!'
24. 'Pat ræð ek þér þriðja, at þú þingi á
deilit við heimska hali;
þvíat ósviðr maðr lætr opt kveðin
verri orð en viti.
25. 'Allt er vant ef þú við þegir —
þá þikkir þú með bleyði borinn
eða sønnu sagðr;
hætrr er heimiskviðr,
nema sér góðan geti;
annars dags láttu hans qndu farit,
ok launa svá lýðum lygi!'
26. 'Pat ræð ek þér it fjórða ef býr fordæða,
vammafull, á vegi:
ganga er betra en gista sé,
þótt þik nött um nemi.'
27. 'Fornjósnað augu þurfu fira synir,
hvars skulu vreiðir vega;
opt bølvísar konur sitja brautu nær,
þær er deyfa sverð ok sefa.'
28. 'Pat ræð ek þér it fimmta, þóttu fagrar sér
brúðir bekkjum á:
sifja silfr látaðu þínnum svefni ráða;
teygjattu þér at kossi konur!'

- 20.⁸³ 'Now you must choose, since a choice is offered to you,
maple of sharp weapons;⁸⁴
speech or silence — keep it in mind yourself!⁸⁵
All misfortunes are measured.'⁸⁶
- 21.⁸⁷ 'I won't flee, even if you know me to be doomed,
I wasn't born with cowardice;
I want to have all your loving counsel,
as long as I live!'
- 22.⁸⁸ 'I advise you this as the first thing, that you be
faultless toward your kin;
[that you] avenge less,⁸⁹ even if they give cause —
that, they say, does good for the dead.⁹⁰
23. 'I advise you this second, that you don't swear an oath,
unless it's a true one;
grim bonds follow upon a breach of troth;
wretched is the wolf⁹¹ of vows!⁹²
24. 'I advise you this third, that you don't dispute
with stupid men at an assembly;
because an unwise man often lets slip
a word that's worse than he knows.⁹³
25. 'All is wanting if you're silent in response⁹⁴ —
then you seem [to have been] born with cowardice,
or [to be] accused in truth;
home-repute⁹⁵ is risky,
unless one gets oneself a good one;
have his breath destroyed another day,⁹⁶
and so repay his lying to people!'
26. 'I advise you this as the fourth thing if a witch dwells,⁹⁷
full of vices, on your way:
it's better to walk on than be her guest,
even if night should overtake you.'
27. 'The sons of men need scouting eyes,
wherever wrathful ones shall fight;⁹⁸
often women wise in evil⁹⁹ sit near the way,
they who blunt sword and spirit.¹⁰⁰
28. 'I advise you this as the fifth thing, even though you see
fair brides¹⁰¹ on the benches:
don't let [their] relatives' silver¹⁰² rule your sleep;¹⁰³
don't lure women to you for kissing!'

29. 'Þat ræð ek þér it séttá, þótt með seggjum fari
 glörmál til ofug;
 drukkinn deila skalattu við dólgiðu —
 margan stelr vín viti.
30. 'Söngr ok þl hefr seggjum verit
 morgum at móðtrega:
 sumum at bana, sumum at bölstofum;
 fjölð er þat er tregr fira.
31. 'Þat ræð ek þér it sjaunda ef þú sakar deilir
 við hugfulla hali:
 berjask er betra en brenna sé
 inni auðstofum.
32. 'Þat ræð ek þér it átta, at þú skalt við illu sjá
 ok firrask flærðarstafi;
 mey þú teygjat né manns konu,
 né eggja ofgamans!
33. 'Þat ræð ek þér it níunda, at þú nám bjargir,
 hvars þú á foldum finnr,
 hvárts eru sóttdauðir eða eru sædauðir
 eða eru vápndauðir verar.
34. 'Laug skal gøra þeim er liðnir eru,
 þvá hendr ok hoftuð,
 kemba ok þerra, áðr í kistu fari,
 ok biðja sælan sofa.
35. 'Þat ræð ek þér it tíunda, at þú triúir aldri
 várum vardropa,
 hvártstu ert bróður bani
 eða hafir þú feldan foður:
 úlfr er í ungum syni,
 þótt sé hann gulli gladdir.
36. 'Sakar ok heiptir, hyggjat svefnar vera,
 né harm in heldr;
 vits ok vápna vant er jofri at fá,
 þeim er skal fremstr með firum.
37. 'Þat ræð ek þér it ellipta, at þú við illu sér
 hvern veg at vegi;
 langt líf þíkkjumsk ek lofðungs vita,
 rømm eru róg of risin!'

29. 'I advise you this as the sixth thing, even if ale-talk
turns too hostile among men:
when drunk, you mustn't dispute with a battle-tree¹⁰⁴ —
wine steals the wits from many.'
30. 'Song and ale have for many men
been a source of mood-sorrow:
for some through death, for some through evil-staves;¹⁰⁵
many's the thing that grieves men.'
31. 'I advise you this as the seventh thing if you dispute cases¹⁰⁶
against courageous men:
for treasure-staves,¹⁰⁷ it's better to fight
than to be burned inside.¹⁰⁸
32. 'I advise you this as the eighth thing, that you must guard against evil
and distance yourself from deceit-staves;¹⁰⁹
don't seduce a maiden or a man's wife,
or incite them to excessive pleasure!¹¹⁰
33. 'I advise you this as the ninth thing, that you protect corpses,¹¹¹
wherever you encounter them on earth,
whether they are sickness-dead or are sea-dead
or are weapon-dead men.'
34. 'One must prepare a bath for those who have passed away,
wash their hands and head,
comb and dry them, before they go in the coffin,
and pray that they sleep blessedly.'
35. 'I advise you this as the tenth thing, that you never trust
the vows of an outlaw's¹¹² offspring,
whether you're his brother's slayer
or you have felled his father:
there's a wolf in a young son,
even if he's gladdened with gold.'
36. 'Lawsuits and hatreds, don't think that they're sleepy,¹¹³
nor sorrow¹¹⁴ any the more;
there's a need for a boar¹¹⁵ to obtain wit and weapons,
for the one who shall be foremost among men.'
37. 'I advise you this as the eleventh thing, that you guard against evil
in every way along the way;¹¹⁶
I believe I know the praiseworthy one's life will be long,¹¹⁷
strong are the strifes that have arisen!'

Textual Apparatus to *Sigrdrífumál*

Sigrdrífumál] This title is not in R, nor does this manuscript contain any other indication that a new text begins at this point. The distinction between *Fm.* and *Sd.* is an editorial perception, which has become traditional, on the basis of later, paper manuscripts. Some of these have a different title: *Brynhildarkviða Buðladóttur in fyrsta* ‘The First Poem of Brynhildr, Buðli’s Daughter’.

Stefndi] R *stefni*

1/4 *nauðir*] R *nauþr*

8/4–6 *þá ... mjøðr*] R absent; supplied from VS 21

9/4 *lófa*] R *lofo*

12/2 *mangi*] R *magni*

27/3 *vreiðir*] R *reibir*

29/2 *fari*] After this word comes a major lacuna in R. The text of the remaining stanzas of *Sd.* is based on texts in paper manuscripts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which seem to derive from R before the lacuna’s occurrence, as recorded in the third part of Jón Helgason, *Eddadigte* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1952–56). For details of these manuscripts and of emendations, see that work.

Notes to the Translation

- 1 ‘Hind’s Fell’, as in *Fm.* and VS. Chapter 6 of *Norna-Gests þáttr* has *Hindarheiðr* ‘Hind’s Heath’.
- 2 Francia, kingdom of the Franks.
- 3 A protective wall made from shields placed side by side, a shield-wall.
- 4 I.e., the man’s.
- 5 Sigurðr’s sword.
- 6 This term denotes the grey rings of her mail-coat, but may also suggest the metaphorical fetters of the woman’s magically induced, death-like sleep (cf. *Akv.* 16).
- 7 Sigurðr’s answer is treated as st. 2 in Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, *Eddukvæði*, Íslensk fornrit, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 2014), II.
- 8 Or perhaps ‘a raven’s corpse-strips’ (i.e., shrouds on a dead body). The precise meaning of this passage is uncertain. It might allude to Sigurðr’s killing of Fáfnir and Reginn, whose unburied bodies would have become food for ravens, or to his cutting of the sleeping woman’s mail-coat, which is compared to the white windings around a corpse.
- 9 Sleeping spells carved in runes on a thorn. See below and *Fm.* 43–44.
- 10 I.e., a drink to strengthen his memory. Cf. *Sd.* 5 and *Hdl.* 45.
- 11 This stanza and the next are presumably spoken by the newly awoken woman, Sigrdrífa.
- 12 ‘Day’, personified. In *SnEGylf* (10, p. 13), Dagr’s mother is Nótt ‘Night’.
- 13 Presumably gods or men; cf. *HH.* I 7.
- 14 ‘Night’, personified.

- 15 Possibly *Jgrð* 'Earth', whom *SnEGylf* (10, p. 13) identifies as Nótt's daughter; cf. *Sd.* 4.
- 16 Gods, sometimes specifically the tribe led by Óðinn.
- 17 Goddesses.
- 18 'Victory Driver' or perhaps 'Victory Snowdrift' (i.e., 'Battle'). In VS 21 she is called *Brynhildr*. The question of her name is further complicated by *SnEskáld* (I, 41, p. 47), which does not mention the name *Sigdrifa* but records that *vaknaði hon ok nefndisk Hildr*. *Hon er klluð Brynhildr ok var valkyrja* 'she awoke and named herself Hildr. She is called Brynhildr and was a valkyrie.' In *Hlr* 7 Brynhildr says she was formerly called 'Hildr under helm'.
- 19 'Helmet Gunnarr'.
- 20 Or *Hǫða*'s. In *Hlr.* 8 and VS 21 the name is *Auða*.
- 21 Some editors present this sentence as a half-stanza of *fornyrðislag*, with emendation of *Hauðu* to *Auðu*: *Annarr hét Agnarr, Auðu bróðir, / er vætr engi vildi þiggja*.
- 22 Cf. *Hlr.* 9.
- 23 Sigurðr.
- 24 VS 21 has a close variant of this stanza; instead of *gamanrúna* 'pleasure-runes' (cf. *Háv.* 120, 130), it has *gamanræðna* 'pleasing talks'.
- 25 A kenning for 'warrior', the 'assembly' of mail-coats being battle.
- 26 I.e., infused with magical songs and helpful runes.
- 27 Cf. *Háv.* 120, 130.
- 28 VS 21 has a variant of this stanza (7); notably, instead of *ef þú vilt sigr hafa* 'if you want to have victory', it has *ef þú vill snotr vera* 'if you want to be wise'.
- 29 It would perhaps be better to replace this stanza's first instance of *rísta* 'to inscribe' with *kunna* 'to know'.
- 30 Véttir and *valþost* are obscure terms for parts of a sword. If they are parts of the hilt, perhaps the former is a metal plate or ring, the latter (also in *HHv.* 9) a winding around the grip.
- 31 A god of victory, one of the Æsir.
- 32 VS 21 has a close variant of this stanza (10).
- 33 Presumably with a secondary or underlying sense of 'good-fortune runes', *alu* being an early Norse word for 'good luck'.
- 34 Presumably an 'n' rune, *Nauðr* being its name. It means 'need', 'necessity' or 'distress'.
- 35 VS 21 has a variant of this stanza, from which the second half is here supplied.
- 36 Consecrated by marking with a holy sign.
- 37 A plant of supposedly magical power.
- 38 VS 21 has a variant of this stanza.
- 39 I.e., hasten childbirth. Cf. *Od.* 7.
- 40 Cf. *Sd.* 16.
- 41 Or 'joints'.
- 42 Supernatural women similar to, or identifiable with, the Nornir, who were associated with fate and childbirth; cf. *Fm.* 12.
- 43 I.e., to help.

- 44 VS 21 has a variant of this stanza.
- 45 Ships.
- 46 Literally ‘lay fire in (the) oar’.
- 47 A colour associated with death in Old Norse literature.
- 48 VS 21 has a variant of this stanza.
- 49 Either the limb of a tree (i.e., a branch or twig) or that of a person—or both.
- 50 VS 21 also has this stanza.
- 51 VS 21 has a shorter version of this stanza, ending at *Hroptr*.
- 52 *Hroptr*.
- 53 An alias of Óðinn. It might mean ‘Cryptic/Hidden One’ or ‘Invoker’.
- 54 The identity of Heiðdraupnir is obscure. The name appears to mean ‘Bright/Honour/Heath Dripper’. Cf. *Grm.* 25.
- 55 Hoddrofnir’s identity is also obscure. The name might mean ‘Hoard/Treasure Destroyer’. Cf. *Grm.* 26.
- 56 Probably Óðinn.
- 57 Cf. *HH. II* 10. *Brimir* is here presumably the name of a sword; cf. *Grm.* 44. The events of this stanza are obscure.
- 58 Mímr is probably better known as Mímir; see note to *Vsp.* 45.
- 59 ‘Staves’ as in runic wisdom, words about runic letters.
- 60 VS 21 has a variant of this stanza.
- 61 Presumably Mímr’s head.
- 62 VS 21 explicitly has *váru ristnar* ‘were carved’.
- 63 The shining god is the sun. For the shield, see *Grm.* 38.
- 64 Árvakr and Alsvinnr (Alsviðr) are the horses that draw the sun; see *Grm.* 37.
- 65 The Old Norse line’s lack of alliteration suggests textual corruption. The identity of *Rungnir* (*Raugnir* or *Rognir* in VS 21) is uncertain. Possibilities include the giant Hrungnir, Þórr and Óðinn.
- 66 Sleipnir is Óðinn’s horse.
- 67 B. La Farge and J. Tucker, *Glossary to the Poetic Edda* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992), p. 62 defines these as ‘metal clamps or pieces of wood which attach the upper parts of a sleigh to the runners’.
- 68 VS 21 also has this stanza.
- 69 Bragi is a god of poetry.
- 70 Perhaps an allusion to the gruesome ‘blood-eagle’, supposedly a rite associated with sacrifices to Óðinn; see *Rm.* 26. If so, the ‘bloody wings’ are the victim’s splayed lungs.
- 71 The foot of a bridge.
- 72 Cf. *Sd.* 9.
- 73 Or ‘trail’.
- 74 VS 21 has a significantly different version of this stanza: *Á gleri ok á gulli ok á góðu silfri, / víni ok í virtri ok á vølu sessi, í guma holdi ok Gaupnis oddi ok á gýgjar brjósti, / á nornar nagli ok á nefi uglu* ‘On glass and on gold and on good silver, in wine and in wort and on a seeress’s

- seat, in men's flesh and on Gaupnir's point and on a giantess's breast, on a Norn's nail and on an owl's nose'.
- 75 Unfermented beer.
- 76 *Gungnir* 'Wavering/Shaking One' is Óðinn's spear.
- 77 Grani is Sigurðr's horse.
- 78 Beak.
- 79 VS 21 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 80 VS 21 has a close variant of this stanza.
- 81 Or 'beech-runes'; another possibility is a mistake for *bótrunar* 'remedy-runes'.
- 82 The ruling gods, including Óðinn, will die violently at Ragnarok.
- 83 VS 21 has a variant of this stanza.
- 84 A kenning for 'warrior'.
- 85 The sense and significance of this line are not entirely clear.
- 86 I.e., they are (proportionately?) preordained. VS 21 has *mál* 'words, speeches' instead of *mein* 'misfortunes'.
- 87 That Sigurðr speaks this stanza is explicit in VS 21, where a close variant is quoted.
- 88 Sigdrífa resumes speaking.
- 89 I.e., take no revenge against them (probably).
- 90 Presumably because one's kin will then dispose of one's body properly and recall one with affection.
- 91 Or 'criminal'.
- 92 I.e., an oath-breaker.
- 93 Literally, 'lets a worse word [or 'speech'] be spoken than he knows'.
- 94 I.e., to an accusation.
- 95 Probably a rumoured reputation about oneself.
- 96 I.e., kill your false accuser another day.
- 97 Instead of a *fordæða* 'evil-doer,' 'witch', VS 22 refers to *vándar vættir* 'evil (female) creatures/spirits'.
- 98 For the Old Norse line to alliterate, it requires an East Norse or preliterary West Norse form of *reiðr*, namely **vreiðr*; cf. *Fm.* 7, 17, 30; *Ls.* 15, 18. 27.
- 99 VS 22 refers to *illar vættir* 'evil (female) creatures/spirits'.
- 100 These women may well be supernatural. Cf. *Rm.* 24, *Hm.* 15, 28.
- 101 Presumably potential brides, young women.
- 102 I.e., for a dowry.
- 103 I.e., dominate your dreams, or, perhaps, keep you awake at night.
- 104 Warrior.
- 105 Evil runes or words.
- 106 Lawsuits.
- 107 Wealthy men.

- 108 I.e., inside your house, like, most famously, Njáll and members of his family in the thirteenth-century Icelandic *Brennu-Njáls saga* ‘Saga of Burnt-Njáll’.
- 109 Perhaps runic charms for seduction, or simply deceitful or wanton words or ways.
- 110 I.e., excessive sexual pleasure.
- 111 Presumably by burying them.
- 112 *Vargr* can also mean ‘wolf’.
- 113 I.e., dormant.
- 114 Or ‘harm’.
- 115 Prince, warrior.
- 116 The interpretation of this line is uncertain.
- 117 Possibly *pikkjumsk* should be emended to *pikkjumska* to give the meaning ‘I don’t believe I know ...’ (i.e., ‘I know the praiseworthy one’s life will be short’).

Brot af Sigurðarkviðu

This poem in *fornyrðislag* is known to scholars as *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu* (*Br.*) ‘Fragment of a Lay of Sigurðr’ or *Sigurðarkviða in forna* ‘The Old Lay of Sigurðr’. It is acephalous in **R** (fol. 33r–v) owing to the loss of leaves which also seriously damaged *Sd*. Unfortunately, in contrast to *Sd.*, there is no means of restoring the lost stanzas of *Br.* We cannot even be sure how many stanzas it lacks, but it has been proposed that the poem is now about half its original length.

It is, however, possible to determine broadly the events leading up to the fragment’s starting point by studying other Old Norse accounts of the Nibelung story in **R**, such as *Grp.*, but especially *VS* (up to chapter 32), which is likely to reflect the content of this poem before the loss. The saga even includes a version of one stanza that recurs in *Br.* (4) and several others (quoted below) which may well have been in **R**’s ‘great lacuna’, which possibly included **Sigurðarkviða in meira* ‘The Longer Lay of Sigurðr’.

It is likely that, after exchanging marriage vows with the valkyrie Brynhildr, Sigurðr had come to the court of Gjúki, a king of the southern Rhineland, whose sons included Gunnarr, Högni and Guthormr (Gothormr/Guttormr), and whose daughter was Guðrún. There Sigurðr had unwittingly drunk a magical drink given to him by Grímildr, Gjúki’s wife, which had caused him to forget Brynhildr entirely. Having entered into blood-brotherhood with Gunnarr and Högni, and having married Guðrún, Sigurðr had agreed to help Gunnarr win Brynhildr, as Gunnarr himself had been unable to cross the wall of fire surrounding her dwelling. The two men had exchanged appearances, and Sigurðr had then ridden towards the raging fire, which subsided before him:

Eldr nam¹ at cesask, en jørð at skjálfa,
ok hár logi við himni gnæfa;
fár treystisk þar fylkis rekka
eld at ríða né yfir stíga.

¹ Emended from *man* in *VS* 29.

Sigurðr Grana sverði keyrði,
 eldr sloknaði fyrir göldingi,
 logi allr lægðisk fyrir lofgrjörnum,
 bliku reiði,² er Reginn átti.

Fire began to rage, and the earth to shake,
 and high flame to ascend to the sky;
 few of the men of a marshal dared
 ride into the fire or to surmount it.

Sigurðr spurred Grani with his sword,
 the fire went out before the prince,
 the flame all subsided before the glory-eager one,
 the riding gear glinted, which Reginn owned.

(VS 29)

The disguised Sigurðr lay beside Brynhildr for three nights, but they were separated by his sword throughout, so they never touched. They had then exchanged rings from Fáfnir's treasure in the shared understanding that they would marry, whereupon Sigurðr had left her to return to Gunnarr and the others.

Subsequently, Brynhildr and Guðrún had quarrelled in the Rhine, where Guðrún revealed the deception. Brynhildr said that she would have revenge. Unhappy with her marriage to Gunnarr, she declared to Guðrún:

'Sigurðr vá at ormi, en þat síðan mun
 engum fyrnask, meðan qld lifir;
 en hlýri þinn hvárki þorði
 eld at ríða né yfir stíga.'

'Sigurðr struck at the snake, and henceforth that
 will be forgotten by no one, as long as humanity lives;
 but your brother³ dared neither
 ride into the fire nor surmount it.'

(VS 30)

Afterwards, Gunnarr went to see Brynhildr, who had been made ill by the turn of events. She had harsh words for him and declared that she would cause his death and be revenged on Grímildr. Högni put her in chains to prevent her killing Gunnarr there and then, whereupon she tore down her tapestry work and lamented so loudly that she was heard from far away.

² Emended from *reið* in VS 29.

³ Gunnarr.

Gunnarr went again to see her, as did Högni, but she would speak to neither. Then Guðrún urged Sigurðr to visit her and pacify her with gold. Brynhildr, however, was outraged at his visit. During their difficult conversation Brynhildr expressed regret that she could not redder a sword in Sigurðr's blood, and he, having remembered his love for her, declared that he would like to marry her and leave Guðrún. But Brynhildr was implacable: '*Eigi vil ek þik ... ok engan annarra*' 'I don't want you ... and no other [either]'. Whereupon, *svá segir í Sigurðarkviðu* 'as it says in *Sigurðarkviða* [the Lay of Sigurðr]':

Út gekk Sigurðr andspjalli frá,
hollevnir lofða, ok hnipaði,
svá at ganga nam gunnarfúsum
sundr of síður serkr járnofinn.

Out went Sigurðr from their conversation,
the gracious friend of praiseworthy ones, and hung his head,
so that, for the battle-eager one,⁴ the iron-woven shirt
began to [split] apart at the sides.⁵

(VS 31)

Gunnarr went to see Brynhildr twice more, but she said she would reject him utterly unless he killed Sigurðr and his son. She also falsely told him that Sigurðr had taken her virginity. Gunnarr then discussed the matter with Högni, which is probably the point at which *Br.* begins.

Br. is the first surviving member of a number of poems in **R** concerned with the death of Sigurðr. As they stand, these poems are generally supposed to have been composed in the twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, possibly in the following order, which does not match their sequence in **R**.⁶

1. *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu*
2. *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*
3. **Sigurðarkviða in meira* (a hypothetical work believed by some scholars to have been in **R**'s great lacuna)
4. *Guðrúnarkviða ɔnnur*

⁴ The translation 'battle [*gunnarr*]-eager one' for *gunnarfíss* fails to capture the word's full semantic freight, which includes retrospective allusion both to Sigurðr's initially professed keenness that Brynhildr should be happy with Gunnarr and to his willingness to masquerade as Gunnarr. Cf. *Br.* 8 [9] *gunnar fúsa* describing Gjúki's sons.

⁵ Cf. Sigurðr's earlier cutting of the sleeping Brynhildr from her mail-coat.

⁶ See J. McKinnell, 'Female Reactions to the Death of Sigurðr', in his *Essays on Eddic Poetry*, ed. D. Kick and J. D. Shafer (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014), pp. 249–67 at 250–51, <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442669260-012>

5. *Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta*
6. *Helreið Brynhildar*

In these poems, female voices, especially those of Guðrún and Brynhildr, come to the fore in grief, insult, accusation, self-justification, incitement to vengeance and prophecy.

Important variant accounts of the dealings of figures corresponding to Sigurðr, Gunnarr, Högni, Brynhildr and Guðrún appear in the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, the Old Norse (Norwegian) *Hiðreks saga af Bern*, and the Faroese ballad *Brynhildar tåttur* ‘Brynhild’s Story’.

Synopsis

Verse: What remains of *Br.* probably starts with Högni asking Gunnarr why he wants to kill Sigurðr (1). Gunnarr replies that Sigurðr has tricked him (he presumably believes, mistakenly, that Sigurðr had taken Brynhildr’s virginity) (2). Högni asserts that Brynhildr has incited Gunnarr because she begrudges Guðrún her marriage to Sigurðr (3).

We then hear that Gothormr was fed noxious food, evidently to fortify him for the daunting task of killing Sigurðr (4).

Guðrún then asks where Sigurðr is (5). Högni replies that they have hacked him to pieces (6). Brynhildr congratulates Högni, as she thinks it would have been unfitting for Sigurðr to rule Gjúki’s inheritance, and laughs loudly (7–9). Guðrún declares that their malice will be avenged (10).

A single stanza (possibly misplaced) then records that Sigurðr had died south of the Rhine, and that a raven foretold that Atli would kill both Gunnarr and Högni (11). Gunnarr reflects anxiously on the raven’s words, and those of an eagle (unreported), when riding home (13).

Next Brynhildr expresses her internal conflict about Sigurðr’s killing (14), at which all those present fall silent (15). She describes a dream which bodes ill for Gunnarr and his fellow oath-breakers (16), points out that Gunnarr has forgotten his blood-brotherhood with Sigurðr (17), and reveals that Sigurðr had not betrayed Gunnarr with her (18), but rather placed a sword between them when they slept side-by-side (19).

Prose: A concluding passage records the existence of different traditions about Sigurðr’s death, with some maintaining that he was killed in bed, some in a forest, and one poem that he died at an assembly.

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Brot af Sigurðarkviðu

1.

'....

*Hvat hefir Sigurðr til saka unnit,
er þú fræknan vill fjørvi næma?*

2.

*'Mér hefir Sigurðr selda eiða,
eiða selda, alla logna —
þá vélti hann mik, er hann vera skyldi
allra eiða einn fulltrúi!'*

3.

*'Þik hefir Brynhildr bol at gerva,
heiptar hvattan harm at vinna;
fyrman hon Guðrúnú góðra ráða,
en síðan þér sín at njóta!'*

4.

*Sumir úlf sviðu, sumir orm sniðu,
sumir Gothormi af gera deildu,
áðr þeir mætti, meins um lystir,
á horskum hal hendr um leggja.*

5 [6].

*Úti stóð Guðrún, Gjúka dóttir,
ok hon þat orða alls fyrst um kvað:
'Hvar er nú Sigurðr, seggja dróttinn,
er froendr míni fyrri riða?'*

6 [7].

*Einn því Högni andsvør veitti:
'Sundr hófum Sigurðr sverði hogginn;
gnapir æ grár jór yfir gram dauðum.'*

7 [8].

*Þá kvað þat Brynhildr, Buðla dóttir:
'Vel skuluð njóta vápna ok landa!
Einn myndi Sigurðr óllu ráða,
ef hann lengr litlu lífi heldi!'*

8 [9].

*'Væria þat sömrt at hann svá réði
Gjúka arfi ok Gota mengi,
er hann fimm sonu at fólkraði,
gunnar fúsa, getna hafði!'*

9 [10].

*Hló þá Brynhildr — boer allr dunði —
einu sinni af qllum hug:
'Vel skuluð njóta landa ok þegna,
er þér fræknan gram falla létuð!'*

Fragment of a Lay of Sigurðr

1.¹

‘....
What crime has Sigurðr committed,
that you want to deprive the courageous one of life?’

2.²

‘Sigurðr has given me oaths,
given oaths, all broken —
he tricked me, when he should have been
one fully trustworthy in all oaths!’

3.

‘Brynhildr has inflicted injury on you,
incited hatreds to bring about harm;
she begrudges Guðrún her good marriage,
and that you should enjoy her³ thereafter!’

4.⁴

Some roasted a wolf, some cut up a snake,
some shared [parts] from a greedy one⁵ with Gothormr,⁶
before they, keen to do harm,⁷
could lay hands on the wise man.⁸

5 [6].⁹

Outside stood Guðrún, Gjúki’s daughter,
and she spoke these words first of all:¹⁰
‘Where now is Sigurðr, the lord of men,
since my relatives ride at the fore?’¹¹

6 [7].

To that Högni alone gave answer:
‘We have hacked Sigurðr apart with a sword;
the grey steed¹² hangs its head unceasingly over the dead prince.’

7 [8].

Then Brynhildr said this, Buðli’s daughter:
‘Well shall you enjoy weapons and lands!
Sigurðr alone would have ruled all,
if he’d held onto life a little longer!

8 [9].

‘It wouldn’t be right that he should so rule
Gjúki’s inheritance and a multitude of Gotar,¹³
when he¹⁴ had begotten five sons,¹⁵
eager for battle, for the command of the army!’¹⁶

9 [10].

Brynhildr laughed then — all the dwelling resounded —
one time [only] with all her heart:¹⁷
‘Well shall you enjoy lands and thanes,¹⁸
because you made the brave prince fall!’¹⁹

- 10 [11]. Then Guðrún, Gjúki's daughter, said this:
‘You utter very great atrocities!
May fiends²⁰ have Gunnarr, Sigurðr's gravedigger!
The avidly hateful thought shall be avenged!’
- 11 [5]. Sigurðr had died south of the Rín,²¹
a raven on a tree²² called out loudly:
‘Atli²³ will redder edges²⁴ in you both!²⁵
Oaths will overthrow the warlike ones!’
12. The evening was far advanced, much had been drunk,
pleasing words had been uttered to²⁶ everyone then:²⁷
all slept when they went to bed;
Gunnarr alone lay awake longer than all [the others].
13. His foot began to twitch, he began to mutter a great deal,²⁸
the army-destroyer²⁹ started to think about this:
what those in the tree(?) both said,
the raven, repeatedly, and the eagle, when they rode home.³⁰
14. Brynhildr awoke, Buðli's daughter,
the lady of the Skjoldungar, a little before day:
‘Urge me on or hold me back — the harm is done —
a sorrow to speak of or now to let be!’³¹
15. All fell silent at that speech —
few understand the ways³² of women —
when she, weeping, prepared herself to speak of
that which she, laughing, had demanded of men.
16. I thought, Gunnarr, of grim things in a dream:
all was chilly in the hall, I had a cold bed;
and you, prince, were riding, bereft of joy,
fettered by a fetter in the company of foes;
so all of you, the family of Niflungar,³³ will be
separated from³⁴ strength — you are oath-breakers!
17. ‘You don't recall it too clearly, Gunnarr,
when you both³⁵ let your blood flow into a footprint!³⁶
Now you've repaid him all that with evil,
since he wanted to find himself foremost.³⁷
18. ‘It was revealed then, when the brave one³⁸
had ridden to see me to request [my hand],
how the army-destroyer³⁹ had earlier
kept his oaths to the young prince!⁴⁰

19.

'Benvønd of lét, brugðinn gulli,
margdýrr konungr á meðal okkar;
eldi váru eggjar útan górvær,
en eitrdropum innan fáðar!'

Frá dauða Sigurðar

Hér er sagt í þessi kviðu frá dauða Sigurðar, ok víkr hér svá til, sem þeir dræpi hann úti. En sumir segja svá, at þeir dræpi hann inni í rekkju sinni sofanda. En þýðverskir menn segja svá, at þeir dræpi hann úti í skógi. Ok svá segir í 'Guðrúnarkviðu inni fornu,' at Sigurðr ok Gjúka synir hefði til þings riðit, þá er hann var dreppinn. En þat segja allir einnig, at þeir sviku hann í tryggð ok vógu at honum liggjanda ok óbúnum.

19. ‘The very worthy king⁴¹ let a wound-wand,⁴²
 braided with gold, be between us;⁴³
its edges were forged with fire on the outside,
and dyed with venom-drops on the inside!⁴⁴

About Sigurðr’s Death⁴⁵

It is said here in this poem about the death of Sigurðr, and here it points to [the belief] that they slew him outside. But some say thus, that they slew him inside in his bed as he was sleeping.⁴⁶ And German people say thus, that they slew him outside in a forest.⁴⁷ And it says thus in *Guðrúnarkviða in forna* ['The Old Lay of Guðrún'],⁴⁸ that Sigurðr and Gjúki’s sons had ridden to an assembly, when he was slain. But all say this with one voice, that they broke faith with him and attacked him as he was lying down and unprepared.

Textual Apparatus to *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu*

Brot af Sigurðarkviðu] This title is not in R; it is supplied editorially

1/3 *Hvat hefir Sigurðr til*] R absent; this is a conjectural, but traditional, emendation

2/5 *vélти*] R *velt* (with e caudata)

Fra dauða Sigurðar] This rubricated but faded heading is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this reading is therefore reliant on the transcription therein

Hér] The first letter is large, inset and rubricated but faded in R

riðit] R *riþiN* (i.e., *riþinn*)

Notes to the Translation

- 1 The following question is probably addressed by Högni to Gunnarr, whom Brynhildr has incited to kill Sigurðr.
- 2 Gunnarr speaks this stanza, having apparently been misled by Brynhildr that Sigurðr took her virginity when he slept beside her in Gunnarr's guise.
- 3 Brynhildr.
- 4 A variant of this stanza appears in VS 32: *Sumir viðfiska tóku, sumir vitnishræ skifðu, / sumir Guttormi gáfu gera hold / við mungáti ok marga hluti / aðra í tyfrum* 'Some took wood-fish [i.e., snakes], some sliced wolf-carcass(es), some gave Guttormr greedy one's [i.e., wolf's] flesh with beer and many other things in magic potions'.
- 5 Probably a wolf.
- 6 Gothormr 'Goth Snake' (also known as Guthormr 'God/Good/Battle Snake' and Guttormr), brother of Högni and Gunnarr, was to eat these to fortify himself. It is he who kills Sigurðr.
- 7 Literally, 'desirous of harm'.
- 8 Sigurðr.
- 9 Stanza numbers in brackets are those of NK, which considers one of this poem's stanzas misplaced in R.
- 10 Cf. *Brk.* 2, 3, 9, 12, *Od.* 3.
- 11 Evidently, Sigurðr had always ridden at the front.
- 12 Grani, Sigurðr's horse.
- 13 Goths, or humans in general.
- 14 Probably Gjúki.
- 15 Other Eddic poems and VS mention only three sons of Gjúki: Gunnarr, Högni and Guthormr/Gothormr/ Guttormr (but note *Hdl.* 27 and cf. *Gör.* I 24). However, the existence of two more, Gernoz and Giselher, might be inferred from *Þiðreks saga* and the *Nibelungenlied*.
- 16 Or 'people'.
- 17 Cf. *Sg.* 30.
- 18 The Old Norse line lacks alliteration, which might, however, be supplied by changing *vel* 'well' to *lengi* 'long', or *landa* 'lands' to *vápna* 'weapons' (cf. *Br.* 7[8]).

- 19 Probably a taunt made in the firm belief that they will not.
- 20 Literally, 'fierce ones'.
- 21 The Rhine.
- 22 Or branch, or gallows.
- 23 Atli (Attila), king of the Huns, is Brynhildr's brother and Guðrún's future husband.
- 24 Of weapons.
- 25 Gunnarr and Högni.
- 26 Or 'by'.
- 27 Or 'in every way'. It appears that *hv-* (in *hvívetna*) alliterates with *v-* (in *vilmál*) in the Old Norse line.
- 28 Or simply, 'His foot twitched, he muttered much'.
- 29 Gunnarr.
- 30 An eagle, like the raven, had presumably prophesied the demise of Sigurðr's killers as they rode by.
- 31 Alternatively perhaps 'or to die thus [from unexpressed grief?]'. The meaning of this line is disputed.
- 32 Literally, gestures, manners.
- 33 ON *Niflungar* presumably corresponds to Middle High German *Nibelunge* in the *Nibelungenlied*, but the etymology is uncertain.
- 34 I.e., deprived of.
- 35 Gunnarr and Sigurðr.
- 36 Or 'track', 'trail'. The reference is to part of a supposed rite of blood-brotherhood, one described in chapter 6 of the thirteenth-century *Gísla saga Súrssonar* 'Saga of Gísli Sursson' and chapter 2 of the thirteenth-century *Fóstbraeðra saga* 'Saga of the Sworn Brothers'. It is said to have also involved the participants passing under one or more strips of raised turf which remained in contact with the ground at either end.
- 37 I.e., he wanted either to be able to consider himself the foremost of men, or to put himself in the front in order to win the most glory in battle.
- 38 Sigurðr.
- 39 Sigurðr.
- 40 Gunnarr.
- 41 Sigurðr.
- 42 Sword.
- 43 Sigurðr and Brynhildr, when they slept beside each other.
- 44 Possibly a reference to acid etching.
- 45 A passage similar to the following prose conclusion appears in chapter 9 of *Norma-Gests þáttr*.
- 46 As in *Sg.* 21–25, *Ghv.* 4 and 17, *Hm.* 6–7, *VS* 32 and *SnEskáld* (I, 41, p. 48).
- 47 As in *Piðreks saga* (chapters 346–47), which reflects German tradition, and *Nibelungenlied* (Adventures 15–16).
- 48 Possibly *Gör. II* (see st. 4 thereof).

Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta

This poem, entitled simply *Guðrúnarkviða* ‘Lay of Guðrún’ in R (fol. 33v–34v), is now generally known as *Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta* ‘The First Lay of Guðrún’ (Gðr. I) to distinguish it from the second and third lays of Guðrún found later in the manuscript. It is a fine composition in *fornyrðislag* in which the two dominant female characters of the Völsung-Niflung cycle, Guðrún and Brynhildr, each make a strong emotional and psychological impression.

First we meet Guðrún, Sigurðr’s widow, whose grief at her husband’s death is so extreme that, the poet says, she is preparing herself to die (or simply about to die). Her inner trauma is at first simply but forcefully conveyed through an inability to cry, despite her being impassioned to the point of bursting. This inability, together with her total silence for the first half of the poem, invites comment. Broadly speaking, in Old Norse literature, while men were admired for stoic impassiveness and brevity of speech in the face of death, women were meant to weep at it profusely and, where necessary, incite their close relatives to vengeance. Guðrún’s silence, which economically suggests not only extreme shock and grief but potentially also a combination of incomprehension at familial betrayal, rage, a realization of the wider implications of Sigurðr’s death, and perhaps a determined sense of purpose, is therefore not only unusual but unnerving. This may partly explain why the first people to approach her are noblemen—unnamed but perhaps including her brother, Gunnarr, and brothers-in-law—who try to dissuade her from an (implicitly masculine) hardness of heart. They appear not to fear (principally at least) that she will die, but that she will harden her heart and, by implication, pursue vengeance; the consequences of this would be terrible because her brothers Gunnarr and Högni, whom she might otherwise have incited to avenge Sigurðr’s death, were themselves implicated in his murder. But however wise they are to the danger of intrafamilial vengeance, these men fail to move Guðrún. So, too, do two obscure women (possibly invented by the poet), Gjaflaug and Herborg, whose catalogues of sorrow prefigure Guðrún’s *tregróf* ‘grief-chain’ in Ghv. 21—until Herborg’s foster-daughter, Gullrond (also possibly the poet’s invention), taking a dramatically different approach, sweeps the shroud from Sigurðr’s corpse.

At the shocking sight of Sigurðr’s bloody body, the emotional dam breaks and Guðrún starts to weep. Only a single tear at first, one described with pathetic fallacy as a raindrop, but soon followed by a flood of tears and sympathetic honking from her geese. Given the setting of these events in a mythical time (*Ár var ...* ‘It was early/in

early days ...'), there is subtle resonance here with the weeping of the natural world at the death of Baldr, the god similarly slain treacherously by his brother.¹

Guðrún's weeping, her noble lament for her peerless husband and her admonishment of her brothers bring a strongly elegiac strain to *R.*,² one that returns in *Gōr. II*, *Hlr.*, *Od.* and *Ghv.*, and that also characterizes the skaldic poem *Sonatorrek* 'Wreck of Sons' by the Icelander Egill Skallagrímsson. It also merits comparison to Old English poetry with elegiac elements, such as the 'Finnsburh episode' of *Beowulf*, *The Wife's Lament* and *Wulf and Eadwacer*.³

The well-meaning attempts of the men and women to help Guðrún by encouraging her to cry contrast starkly with the sudden malicious outburst of Brynhildr, whose presence at the scene itself comes as a shock. Obviously stung by Guðrún's description of her as a 'wretched creature', and an earlier indirect put-down in st. 19, while apparently having enough forbearance not to attack Guðrún, she nevertheless proceeds to justify this portrayal by deflecting the 'creature'-accusation onto Gullrǫnd, blaming everything on her brother, Atli, and snorting poison toward the dead Sigurðr. This last detail suggests a figurative echo of the venom-breathing snake Fáfnir, whose gold ('fire of the snake-bed' in st. 26) she and Atli had probably seen on Sigurðr when he visited their home. It serves as a counterpart to Guðrún's eating of some of Fáfnir's heart in the prose introduction; it also prefigures the snake-like killing of Gunnarr by the mother of Atli (and Brynhildr?) in *Od.* 32. By recalling Fáfnir and his cursed treasure in this way, the poet of *Gōr. I* creates a mythically resonant climax to a poem otherwise largely characterized by raw human emotion. This mythical dimension, which calls to mind Fáfnir's death on Sigurðr's sword, adds something to the grim turnaround of the prose conclusion, in which, contrary to the expectation created by the poem's opening stanza, it is not Guðrún who prepares to die but Brynhildr—she has thirteen of her household slain before stabbing herself to death with a sword.

Gōr. I is also of interest for underlining the heterogeneity of Norse traditions about the events surrounding Sigurðr's death, a diversity explicit in the prose epilogue to *Br.* Thus, no other text records the attempts of the noblemen and three women to induce Guðrún to weep, or Brynhildr's response, although this text, or something like it, presumably lies behind the opening scenes of VS 34. There Guðrún laments Sigurðr, before taking to the woods and arriving in Denmark at the hall of King Hálfur and staying with Þóra, daughter of Hákon. There is no corroboration in the saga, or anywhere else, however, of the claim in the prose introduction to *Gōr. I* that Guðrún's

1 Cf. Sigurðr's description as *her-Baldr* 'army-Baldr' in *Sg.* 18.

2 It is described as 'perhaps the most characteristic "Eddic elegy" of all' in D. Sävborg, 'Elegy in Eddic Poetry: Its Origin and Context', in P. Acker and C. Larrington, ed., *Revisiting the Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Heroic Legend* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 81–106 at 102, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203098608-14>

3 For example, in the last of these, a women separated from her husband or lover laments: *bonne hit wæs renig weder, ond ic reotugu sæt* 'then it was rainy weather, and I sat tearful'. Cf. the pathetic fallacy of *Gōr. I* 15.

eating of part of Fáfnir's heart enabled her to understand the language of birds (like Sigurðr).⁴ With regard to this claim, the prose writer's distancing observation ('It is the report of people that ...') suggests that it also appeared non-standard to him.

Synopsis

Prose: An introductory passage records Guðrún's extreme but tear-free grief and how, having eaten of Fáfnir's heart, she understood bird-talk.

Verse: Guðrún sat sorrowfully by Sigurðr's corpse, preparing herself for (or on the point of) death but without expressing her grief (1). Noblemen tried vainly to prevent her hardening her heart (2). Three women, two of them Guðrún's sisters, tried to do the same by telling of their own sorrows (3). First was Gjaflaug (4), whose words were of no avail (5). Next was Herborg (6-10), but she also failed (11). Third was Gullrǫnd, who, instead of lamenting her sorrows, whisked the shroud from Sigurðr's corpse (12-13).

Guðrún looked at Sigurðr's bloody body once (14), whereupon the first outward signs of her emotion showed and a tear ran down her knees (15). She then wept (16), and Gullrǫnd acknowledged the preeminence of her sister's love for Sigurðr (17).

Guðrún then extolled Sigurðr's superiority to her brothers in metaphorical terms (18), reflected on how small she now felt (19), acknowledged how she missed Sigurðr, and blamed her brothers (20), who had sworn oaths to Sigurðr and who would die for having broken them (21). Next she recalled how in happier times her brothers had gone to ask for the hand of the cursed Brynhildr (22).

Brynhildr then cursed whoever had moved Guðrún to speak (23), only to be told to be silent by Gullrǫnd, who declared her the worst ruiner of men (24). Brynhildr responded by blaming her brother Atli (25), and recalling the time when they both saw Sigurðr wearing gold (probably Fáfnir's), a sight she never forgot (26). She gazed with blazing eyes and snorted poison at Sigurðr's wounds (27).

Prose: Guðrún then went away to a wood and on to Denmark, where she stayed with a certain Þóra, daughter of a man called Hákon. Brynhildr no longer wished to live. She had some of her slaves and serving-women killed and then took her own life with a sword.

⁴ VS 28 records that her eating of some of Fáfnir's heart made her grimmer and wiser, but not that it conferred understanding of birdsong.

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Guðrún sat yfir Sigurði dauðum. Hon grét eigi sem aðrar konur, en hon var búin til at springa af harmi. Til gengu bæði konur ok karlar at hugga hana, en þat var eigi auðvelt. Þat er sögn manna at Guðrún hefði etit af Fáfnis hjarta ok hon skilði því fugls rødd.

Þetta er enn kveðit um Guðrúnu:

Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta

1. Ár var, þats Guðrún görðisk at deyja,
er hon sat sorgfull yfir Sigurði;
görðit hon hjúfra né höndum slá,
né kveina um sem konur aðrar.
2. Gengu jarlar alsnotrir fram,
þeir er harðs hugar hana lóttu;
þeygi Guðrún gráta mátti —
svá var hon móðug, mundi hon springa.
3. Sátu ítrar jarla brúðir,
gulli búnar, fyr Guðrúnu;
hver sagði þeira sinn oftrega,
þann er bitrastan um beðit hafði.
4. Þá kvað Gjaflaug, Gjúka systir:
'Mik veit ek á moldu munar lausasta:
hefi ek fimm vera forspell beðit,
tveggja dœtra, þriggja systra,
áttu broeðra — þó ek ein lifi!'
5. Þeygi Guðrún gráta mátti:
svá var hon móðug at mög dauðan
ok harðhuguð um hrør fylkis.
6. Þá kvað þat Herborg, Húnalands dróttning:
'Hefi ek harðara harm at segja:
mínir sjau synir sunnan lands,
verr inn átti, í val fellu;
7. 'faðir ok móðir, fjórir brœðr,
þau á vági vindr of lék,
barði bára við borðþili.'
8. 'Sjálf skylda ek gófga, sjálf skylda ek gótvá,
sjálf skylda ek höndla Helfor þeira;
þat ek allt um beið ein misseri,
svá at mér maðr engi munar leitaði.'

Guðrún sat over¹ the dead Sigurðr. She did not weep as other women, but she was ready to burst from grief. To her went both women and men to console her, but that was not easily done. It is the report of people that Guðrún had eaten of Fáfnir's heart and as a result of that she understood bird-language.

This is also spoken about Guðrún:

The First Lay of Guðrún

1. Early it was,² when Guðrún got herself ready to die,³
when she sat sorrowful over Sigurðr;⁴
she did not howl or strike with her hands,⁵
or wail about it like other women.⁶
2. Very wise earls⁷ came forward,
they who tried to dissuade her from hardness of heart;
yet Guðrún could not cry at all —
so impassioned was she, she might have burst apart.
3. Stately brides of earls⁸ sat,
adorned with gold, before Guðrún;
each of them spoke of her⁹ extreme sorrow,
the severest that she had suffered.
4. Then Gjaflaug¹⁰ spoke, Gjúki's sister:
'I know myself [to be] the most bereft of love on earth:
I have experienced the loss of five husbands,
two daughters, three sisters,
eight brothers — yet I live [on], alone!'
5. Yet Guðrún could not cry at all:
so impassioned was she at the young man's death
and hard-hearted over the marshal's corpse.
6. Then Herborg¹¹ said this, queen of Húnaland:¹²
'I have a harsher harm to speak of:
my seven sons, in a southern land,
[and my] husband the eighth, fell in battle;
7. '[my] father and mother, [and] four brothers,
the wind played with them on the wave,
a billow struck the board-wall.¹³
8. I myself had to adorn them,¹⁴ I myself had to bury them,
I myself had to handle their Hel-journey,¹⁵
all that I experienced in one season,¹⁶
so that no one made me happy.

9. 'Pá varð ek hapter ok hernuma
sams misseris síðan verða;
skylda ek skreyta ok skúa binda
hersis kván hverjan morgin.
10. 'Hon oegði mér af afbrýði,
ok hörðum mik hoggum keyrði;
fann ek húsguma hvergi in betra,
en húsfreyju hvergi verri!'
11. Þeygi Guðrún gráta mátti;
svá var hon móðug at mög dauðan
ok harðhuguð um hrør fylkis.
12. Þá kvað þat Gullrönd, Gjúka dóttir:
'Fá kanntu, fóstra, þótt þú fróð sér,
ungu vífi andspjöll bera!'
Varaði hon at hylja um hrør fylkis.
13. Svipti hon blæju af Sigurði
ok vatt vengi fyr vífs knjám:
'Líttu á ljúfan, leggðou munn við grön,
sem þú hálsaðir heilan stilli!'
14. Á leit Guðrún einu sinni;
sá hon doglings skor dreyra runna,
fránar sjónir fylkis liðnar,
hugborg jofurs hjörvi skorna.
15. Þá hné Guðrún, holl við bólstri;
haddr losnaði, hlýr roðnaði,
en regns dropi rann niðr um kné.
16. Þá grét Guðrún, Gjúka dóttir,
svá at tár flugu tresk í gógnum,
ok gullu við gæss í túni,
mærir fuglar er mær átti.
17. Þá kvað þat Gullrönd, Gjúka dóttir:
'Ykkar vissa ek ástir mestar
manna allra fyr mold ofan;
unðir þú hvárki, úti né inni,
systir mín, nema hjá Sigurði!'
18. 'Svá var minn Sigurðr hjá sonum Gjúka,
sem væri geirlaukr ór grasi vaxinn,
eða væri bjartr steinn á band dreginn,
jarknasteinn yfir զðlingum!'

9. ‘Then I was compelled to become a captive and a prisoner of war
in the same season thereafter;
I had to adorn¹⁷ and to bind the shoes of
a chieftain’s wife each morning.
10. ‘She intimidated me out of envy,
and hit me with hard blows;
I found a better house-man nowhere,
but a worse house-lady nowhere!’
11. Yet Guðrún could not cry at all:
so impassioned was she at the young man’s death
and hard-hearted over the marshal’s corpse.
12. Then Gullrǫnd¹⁸ said this, Gjúki’s daughter:
‘Little do you know, foster-mother,¹⁹ even though you are wise,
how to broach conversation with a young wife!’
She advised against covering the marshal’s corpse.
13. She swept the shroud from Sigurðr
and placed a pillow²⁰ before the wife’s knees:
‘Look at your loved one, lay your mouth against his moustache,
as you used to embrace the leader while he was whole!’
14. Guðrún looked at him one time [only];
she saw Dagr’s descendant’s²¹ hair streaming with blood,
the sparkling eyes of the marshal [that had] passed away,²²
the boar’s²³ heart-stronghold²⁴ cut open by a sword.
15. Then Guðrún sank, leant against the bolster;
her hair came loose, her cheek reddened,
and a drop of rain²⁵ ran down over her knees.
16. Then Guðrún wept, Gjúki’s daughter,
so that tears flew through her tresses,²⁶
and at that geese honked²⁷ in the home-meadow,²⁸
excellent birds which the young woman owned.
17. Then Gullrǫnd said this, Gjúki’s daughter:²⁹
‘I know your love³⁰ was the greatest
of all people upon earth;
you were happy nowhere, [neither] outside nor inside,
my sister, unless beside Sigurðr!’
- 18.³¹ ‘So was my Sigurðr beside the sons of Gjúki,
as if he were a spear-leek³² grown higher than the grass,
or a bright stone³³ strung on a band,³⁴
a noble stone over noblemen!

19. 'Ek þóttak ok þjóðans rekkum
hverri hærri Herjans dísi;
nú em ek svá lítil sem lauf sé
opt í jöлstrum, at jołfur dauðan!
20. 'Sakna ek í sessi ok í sæingu
míns málvinar — valda megin Gjúka!
Valda megin Gjúka mínu bølví
ok systr sinnar sárum gráti!
21. 'Svá ér um lýða landi eyðið,
sem ér um unnuð eiða svarða;
manu þú, Gunnarr, gulls um njóta;
þeir munu þér baugar at bana verða,
er þú Sigurði svarðir eiða.
22. 'Opt var í túni teiti meiri,
þá er minn Sigurðr soðlaði Grana,
ok þeir Brynhildar biðja fóru,
armrar vættar, illu heilli!'
23. Þá kvað þat Brynhildr, Buðla dóttir:
'Vón sé sú vætr vers ok barna
er þik, Guðrún, gráts um beiddi
ok þér í morgun málrúnar gaf!'
24. Þá kvað þat Gullrond, Gjúka dóttir:
'Pegi þú, þjóðleið, þeira orða!
Urðr զðlinga hefir þú æ verit!
Rekr þik alda hvern illrar skepnu —
sorg sára sjau konunga
ok vinspell vífa mest!'
25. Þá kvað þat Brynhildr, Buðla dóttir:
'Veldr einn Atli զllu bølví,
of borinn Buðla, bróðir minn!'
26. 'Þá er vit í høll húnskrar þjóðar,
eld á jołfri ormbeðs litum;
þess hefi ek gangs goldit síðan,
þeirar sýnar — sámk ey!'
27. Stóð hon und stoð, strengði hon eflí;
brann Brynhildi, Buðla dóttur,
eldr ór augum, eitri fnæsti,
er hon sár um leit á Sigurði.

19. ‘I also seemed to the king’s men
higher than any woman of Herjann,³⁵
now I am as little as a leaf often is
on(?) bay willows,³⁶ after the dead boar!³⁷
20. ‘I miss in his seat and in his bed
my friendly confidant³⁸ — the sons of Gjúki are the cause!
The sons of Gjúki are the cause of my suffering
and their sister’s sorrowful crying!
21. ‘Thus you³⁹ will empty the land of its inhabitants,
as you did swear oaths;⁴⁰
you won’t, Gunnarr, profit from the gold;
those arm-rings will bring about your death,
since you⁴¹ swore oaths to Sigurðr.
22. ‘There was often more merriment in the home-meadow,
when my Sigurðr saddled Grani,
and they went to ask for Brynhildr,
[that] wretched creature, with bad luck!’
23. Then Brynhildr said this, Buðli’s daughter:
‘May that creature be in want of husband and children
who brought you to tears, Guðrún,
and gave you speech-runes⁴² this morning!’
24. Then Gullrønd said this, Gjúki’s daughter:
‘Be silent, widely loathed one — [enough] of those words!
You’ve always been the undoing⁴³ of noblemen!
Every evil fate of men drives you on —
[you’re] the sore sorrow of seven kings⁴⁴
and the worst⁴⁵ friend-ruiner of women!⁴⁶
25. Then Brynhildr said this, Buðli’s daughter:
‘Atli alone is the cause of all [this] evil,
[the man] born of Buðli, my brother!⁴⁷
26. ‘When we two [were] in the hall of the Hunnish people,
we saw fire of the snake-bed⁴⁸ on the boar;⁴⁹
I’ve since paid for [that] expedition,⁵⁰
for that sight — I was always uneasy about it!’
27. She stood by a post, she summoned her strength;
fire burnt from the eyes of Brynhildr,
Buðli’s daughter, [and] she snorted poison,
when she looked at the wounds on Sigurðr.

Guðrún gekk þaðan á braut til skógar á eyðimerkr ok fór allt til Danmarkar ok var þar með Þóru, Hákonar dóttur, sjau misseri.

Brynhildr vildi eigi lifa eptir Sigurð. Hon lét drepa þræla sína átta ok fimm ambóttir. Þá lagði hon sik sverði til bana, svá sem segir í 'Sigurðarkviðu inni skómmu.'

Guðrún went away from there to a wood in a wasteland and went all the way to Danmörk⁵¹ and there stayed with Þóra, daughter of Hákon, for seven seasons.⁵²

Brynhildr did not want to live after Sigurðr. She had her eight slaves killed and five serving-women. Then she stabbed herself to death with a sword, as it says in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* ['The Short Lay of Sigurðr'].⁵³

Textual Apparatus to *Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta*

Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta] R *Guðrúnarkviða*, a rubricated but faded heading, illegible in the facsimile volume of R; the reading *Guðrúnarkviða* is reliant on the transcription therein. The words *in fyrsta* are supplied editorially.

1/1 Ár] The first letter is large, inset and red, but faded, in R

8/4 *helfor*] R *her for* (i.e., *herfyr* ‘army/war-journey’)

17/1 *Gullrønd*] R absent

19/7 *i*] R absent

20/6 *bølvi*] R absent

21/5 *mana*] R *manna*

27/2 *efli*] R *elvi*

27 pr. *Guðrún*] R *Gvnnarr*

27 pr. *Sigurðarkviðu*] R *sigurdar qvíþi*

Notes to the Translation

1 I.e., by and leaning over.

2 I.e., it was long ago.

3 Or ‘... was about to die’. Cf. *Gðr. II* 11.

4 The action of *sitja yfir* ‘sitting over’ (i.e., presumably, sitting beside and leaning over) a dead relative was probably an old Germanic custom.

5 I.e., strike her hands together, an old Germanic gesture of grief. Cf. *Gðr. II* 11, *Sg. 25*.

6 Cf. *Gðr. II* 11.

7 They might include Gunnarr, whom Guðrún addresses directly in st. 21.

8 Possibly three of the ‘earls’ of the preceding stanza.

9 I.e., her own, not Guðrún’s.

10 *Gjaf-* probably means ‘gift’, but the sense of *-laug* is uncertain.

11 ‘Army Stronghold’.

12 Land of the Huns.

13 The side of their ship.

14 Literally, ‘make them noble’, presumably by adorning their dead bodies.

15 What preparation this involved is unknown, but perhaps it entailed the provision of goods for the journey to Hel.

16 I.e., one half-year.

17 Or ‘dress (in finery)’.

18 ‘Gold-Edge/Shield’.

19 Herborg.

20 Or cushion.

- 21 For *döglingr* as ‘descendant of Dagr [‘Day’]’, see *HH. I 7*; alternatively, ‘the prince’s’.
- 22 I.e., grown dim.
- 23 Sigurðr’s.
- 24 Or ‘courage-fortress’, i.e., his chest.
- 25 Both an instance of pathetic fallacy and a metaphor for one of Guðrún’s tears.
- 26 The interpretation of *tresk*, here translated ‘tresses’, is disputed.
- 27 Literally, ‘yelled’.
- 28 Cf. *Sg. 29*.
- 29 Gullrond is an otherwise almost unknown character.
- 30 I.e., that of Guðrún and Sigurðr.
- 31 Guðrún speaks at last.
- 32 Garlic.
- 33 I.e., a gemstone.
- 34 I.e., a cord.
- 35 ‘Army Leader’, an alias of Óðinn. His women are valkyries, the most famous of whom, Brynhildr, is watching and listening.
- 36 The precise sense of this passage is unclear.
- 37 Sigurðr.
- 38 Literally, ‘my conversation-friend’.
- 39 Pl., in reference to the sons of Gjúki, her brothers.
- 40 I.e., to Sigurðr.
- 41 Sg.
- 42 I.e., got Guðrún to speak, as if by magic. Cf. *Sd. 12*.
- 43 Literally, ‘weird’, ‘(evil) fate’; a nonce identification with the Norn called *Urðr* is conceivable.
- 44 If the number is to interpreted literally, the seven may be Sigurðr, Sigurðr’s son, Guthormr (Gothormr/Guttormr), Gunnarr, Högni and two other sons of Gjúki (Gernož and Giselher); cf. *Br. 8*.
- 45 Literally, ‘greatest’.
- 46 Or ‘of wives’. The accusation is ambiguous as to whether it charges Brynhildr with being the worst example of a woman who ruins friendships or of a person who ruins women’s friendships.
- 47 Brynhildr may be trying to exonerate herself by claiming that it was Atli’s desire for the Burgundians’ gold that gave rise to all the trouble.
- 48 A kenning for ‘gold’, here probably that which Sigurðr took from Fáfnir’s lair.
- 49 Presumably Sigurðr.
- 50 Probably Sigurðr’s visit to the Hunnish hall.
- 51 Denmark.
- 52 I.e., half-years. Cf. *Gðr. II 14*.
- 53 This specific detail is not recorded in the following poem, which is entitled *Kviða Sigurðar* ‘Poem of Sigurðr’ in R, but which has come to be known as *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*. However, Brynhildr does stab herself fatally with a sword in chapter 9 of *Norna-Gests þáttr*.

Sigurðarkviða in skamma

An immediate obstacle to the appreciation of this poem is presented by its title (now titles), which, today may appear inadequately representative of its nature and set the wrong expectations. In **R** (fol. 34v–36r) the poem is called simply *Kviða Sigurðar* ‘Lay of Sigurðr’, but it is now generally known as *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* (*Sg.*) ‘The Short Lay of Sigurðr’, in contrast to **Sigurðarkviða in meira* ‘The Longer/Greater Lay of Sigurðr’, a hypothetical poem often supposed to have been recorded earlier in **R** on leaves now lost. *Sg.* may have been shorter than that hypothetical poem, but at seventy-one stanzas of *fornyrðislag* it is not short; it is actually the third-longest poem in **R** (as it stands), behind only *Háv.* (a likely composite work) and *Am.* This point matters because an audience expecting a compact composition of highly charged emotional immediacy like *Gōr. I* may be unprepared for, and therefore disappointed by, the more expansive and less explosive nature of *Sg.*, especially given its ‘obscure, allusive narration of events’.¹ Also, although Sigurðr does make a brief death-bed appearance, *Sg.* is not really about him. It would be better called *Brynhildarkviða*, because its main character, and the one who leaves the most abiding impression, is Brynhildr.²

For *Sg.* is largely a study of how the heart and mind of this impassioned woman—whose desperation, both loving and potentially murderous, for Sigurðr surfaces briefly in st. 6—turned to hard-heartedness, cold calculation, instigation of revenge, prophecy and suicide. As such, Brynhildr undergoes an inversion of Guðrún’s progression, in *Gōr. I*, from silent grief on the point of death to emotional release and prolonged life.

The counsels of women are proverbially ‘cold’ in Old Norse literature,³ and this view is exemplified by the thwarted, vengeful Brynhildr of *Sg.* In perhaps the poem’s most memorable stanza (8), she fills up metaphorically with ice-floes and icicles (or

1 C. M. Sperberg-Macqueen, ‘The Legendary Form of *Sigurðarkviða in Skamma*’, ANF 100 (1985), 16–40 at 19; interested readers are referred to this valuable article, which investigates the possible underlying events in detail. The difficulty of following the poem’s events is compounded by the potential misordering of the rather obscure stt. 36–39.

2 T. M. Andersson, *The Legend of Brynhild* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 249 observes: ‘The Brynhild of *Skamma*, and more particularly of *Meiri*, is the most complete psychological portrait, male or female, in Icelandic literature’. He also observes that ‘Brynhild is the most dominant and triumphant figure in Germanic legend’ (p. 245), whereas Sigurðr is a ‘pale personality in most versions of the story’ (p. 241).

3 See S. M. Andersson, ‘Introduction: “og eru köld kvenna ráð”’, in S. M. Andersson and K. Swenson, ed., *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Collection of Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. xi–xvi.

glaciers), at the same time as Sigurðr and Guðrún sleep together in a warm bed. After instigating the murder of Sigurðr and of his and Guðrún's son, this Northern ice-maiden coolly makes preparations, in precise detail, for her final place of rest with Sigurðr. This is apparently to be an emulation of the flame-enveloped stronghold in which she had first lain in a prolonged, deathlike slumber and subsequently slept chastely beside Sigurðr. There she will melt, next to Sigurðr, in the heat of a funeral pyre. Although she could not have Sigurðr in life, having committed suicide, she will lie beside him once more in death.⁴

Recognition of this emulation of Brynhildr's earlier slumber calls attention to the notable absence from *Sg.*, in contrast to several preceding poems, of Óðinn, the god whose magic had condemned her to prolonged sleep. He is not mentioned once—even his protégé Sigurðr is, in *Sg.* 24, the friend of Freyr, the god who makes no women cry (according to *Ls.* 37), not of Óðinn. Furthermore, Brynhildr kills herself not by stabbing herself with a spear in classic Óðinnic fashion, but by piercing herself, through her mail-coat, with a sword.⁵ If she has rejected her god, her subsequent journey, in *Hlr.*, to Hel rather than Valhöll, indicates more clearly that he has rejected her.

Sg. is thought to borrow from numerous other Eddic poems and therefore to be among the youngest of these compositions.⁶ In turn, *VS* apparently paraphrases passages from a version of *Sg.*, especially in chapters 32 and 33.

Important variant accounts of the dealings of figures corresponding to Sigurðr, Gunnarr, Hogni, Brynhildr and Guðrún appear in the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, the Old Norse (Norwegian) *Biðreks saga af Bern* and the Faroese ballad *Brynhildar tåttur* 'Brynhild's Story'.

Synopsis

Long ago, Sigurðr visited the home of King Gjúki, and exchanged oaths of allegiance with Gjúki's sons, Gunnarr and Hogni (1). They offered him in marriage Guðrún, Gjúki's daughter, and drank together many a day (2), until they went to ask for Brynhildr, whom Sigurðr would have had for himself, were he not married to Guðrún (3). Sigurðr, having probably assumed Gunnarr's appearance, laid a sword between himself and Brynhildr, whom he reserved for Gunnarr (4).

Brynhildr, who had, up to that time, known no suffering or disgrace (5), yearns for Sigurðr but declares that, if she cannot have him, he will die (6). She curses the Nornir

4 Suicide is thought unlikely to have been Brynhildr's original fate. Andersson, *Legend of Brynhild*, p. 241 deems it 'an idiosyncratic deviation from the common version' in which she took revenge for deceit and survived. He suggests influence from the suicide of Dido, queen of Carthage, in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

5 Cf. Sigurðr's slitting of Brynhildr's mail-coat with his sword in *VS* 21. Sexual symbolism is a possibility.

6 Sperberg-Macqueen, 'Legendary Form', 25 remarks on the poet's 'almost constant citation of earlier poems'; for specifics, see Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 2nd edn (Copenhagen: Gad, 1920), I, 291–92.

who shaped her miserable fate (7), and went outside in icy distress each evening, when Sigurðr and Guðrún lay in bed together (8). She declares she must content herself with her grim spirit (9), and threatens to leave Gunnarr unless he kills both Sigurðr (10–11) and his son (12).

Gunnarr is distressed at this, and uncertain what to do, given his affection for Sigurðr (13). He asks Högni to speak with him in private (14). Gunnarr declares that he will die before he loses Brynhildr and her riches (15), and asks Högni if he is willing to join him in betraying Sigurðr, in view of the great financial gain (16). Högni replies that it would be unfitting for them to break their oaths by killing Sigurðr (17), and observes that there are no happier men than the four of them—he, Gunnarr, Sigurðr and Guthormr—when they rule together (18). He blames Brynhildr’s passionate incitement for this course of action (19). Gunnarr decides to have Guthormr do the killing, since he had not sworn oaths to Sigurðr (20). Guthormr was easily incited and soon buried a sword in Sigurðr’s heart (21). Sigurðr, however, threw his sword after Guthormr, slicing him in two (22–23).

Guðrún awoke beside Sigurðr, drenched in his blood (24). He tells her not to weep (25) and intimates that her brothers will also kill their young son, and all because of Brynhildr (26–27). He adds that he did not touch Brynhildr and therefore did not break his oaths to Gunnarr (28). At that, Guðrún sighed, Sigurðr died (29), and Brynhildr laughed once at Guðrún’s weeping (30).

Gunnarr, having recognized the malice in Brynhildr’s laughter (31), declares that she is worthy of seeing her brother, Atli, killed in front of her (32). She replies that Atli will always be stronger than him (33), and observes that it was Gunnarr and at least one other who had decided on causing strife (probably by threatening to attack if Brynhildr were not betrothed to Gunnarr) (34). She recalls that she never wanted to marry before the sons of Gjúki rode in (35), whereupon she promised herself to Sigurðr (whether through a formal betrothal is unclear) (36 [39]). Atli had told her that he would not grant her the wealth he had bestowed on her unless she let herself be married (presumably to Gunnarr) (37 [36]). This had put her in a state of confusion as to whether to fight (probably against Gunnarr and his brothers) (38 [37]), but this was somehow resolved when (or despite the fact that) she set her heart on Sigurðr and his treasures (39 [38]). She declares that she loved only one man (Sigurðr), and determines to kill herself (40–41).

Gunnarr and others tried to dissuade her from suicide (42), but she rejected their embraces (43). Gunnarr then spoke to Högni, telling him that he wanted all their men to try to stop her (44), a decision Högni disapproved of, as he would rather see the cursed woman dead (45). Gunnarr left the conversation downcast, and went to where Brynhildr was distributing treasures (46).

Brynhildr gazed at her possessions and dead women (who presumably had committed suicide or been killed) before donning her golden mail-coat and stabbing herself with a sword (47). She sank down (48) and invited those women who wanted

gifts to approach her (49), but all declared that enough had already died and that they had work to do (50). Brynhildr then declares that she does not want anyone to die with her unwillingly (51), but that fewer treasures will be cremated with them if they do not (52).

She then tells Gunnarr to give up hope for her (53), and starts to prophesy. She says that he and Guðrún will be reconciled sooner than he thinks (54), that Svanhildr (daughter of Guðrún and Sigurðr), a radiant girl, will be born (55), and that Guðrún will marry Atli unwillingly (56). Having recalled her betrayal (57), Brynhildr goes on to foresee that Oddrún, Atli's other sister, will have an affair with Gunnarr (58), that Atli will put him in a snake-enclosure (59), and that, soon after, Guðrún will kill Atli and his sons (60). She adds that it would be more fitting for Guðrún to accompany Sigurðr in death (61), but that Guðrún will rather reach Jónakr's land (62). Svanhildr will be sent away from there (63), to marry King Jórmunrekkr, but will be betrayed by the king's counsellor, Bikki, with the result that Sigurðr's line will end (64).

Brynhildr then makes her last request, which is that Gunnarr build her a stronghold that will serve as a spacious pyre for Sigurðr, her and others (65). She gives instructions for its preparation and arrangement, stipulating, among other things, that a sword be laid between her and Sigurðr, as it was formerly (66–68), so that their journey to the afterlife will be ennobled (69–70). Finally, her breath failing, Brynhildr announces her death, having spoken, in her words, 'only truth' (71).

Further Reading

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Sigurðarkviða in skamma

Kviða Sigurðar

1. Ár var, þats Sigurðr sótti Gjúka,
Völsungr ungi, er vegit hafði;
tók við tryggðum tveggja brœðra,
seldusk eiða eljunfrœknir.
2. Mey buðu honum ok meiðma fjolð,
Guðrúnu ungu, Gjúka dóttur;
drukku ok dœmdu dœgr mart saman,
Sigurðr ungi ok synir Gjúka.
3. Unz þeir Brynhildar biðja fóru,
svá at þeim Sigurðr reið í sinni,
Völsungr ungi, ok vega kunni;
hann um ætti, ef hann eiga knætti.
4. Seggr inn suðrceni lagði sverð nøkkvit,
mæki málfán, á meðal þeira;
né hann konu kyssa góði,
né húnskr konungr hefja sér at armi;
mey frumunga fal hann megi Gjúka.
5. Hon sér at lífi löst né vissi
ok at aldrlagi ekki grand,
vamm þat er væri eða vera hygði.
Gengu þess á milli grímmar urðir.
6. Ein sat hon úti aptan dags;
nam hon svá bert um at mælask:
'Hafa skal ek Sigurð — eða þó svelti —
mög frumungan, mér á armi!
7. 'Orð mæltak nú, iðrumk eptir þess;
kván er hans Guðrún, en ek Gunnars;
ljótar Nornir skópu oss langa þrá!'
8. Opt gengr hon innan, ills um fyld,
ísa ok jókla, aptan hvern,
er þau Guðrún ganga á beð
ok hana Sigurðr sveipr í ripti,
konungr inn húnski, kván frjá sína.

The Short Lay of Sigurðr

Lay of Sigurðr

1. Early it was,¹ when Sigurðr visited Gjúki,²
the young Völsungr,³ who had slain;⁴
he⁵ received the troths of two brothers,⁶
the strong-willed bold ones gave each other oaths.
2. They offered him a maiden and a multitude of treasures,
young Guðrún, daughter of Gjúki;
they drank and debated together many a day,
young Sigurðr and the sons of Gjúki.
- 3.⁷ Until they⁸ went to ask for Brynhildr,
so that Sigurðr rode in their fellowship,
the young Völsungr, and he knew the ways,⁹
he¹⁰ would have owned her,¹¹ if he could have.¹²
4. The southern man¹³ laid a naked sword,
a sign-coloured blade,¹⁴ in between them;
he did not attempt to kiss the woman,
nor did the Hunnish king¹⁵ lift her in his arms;
he reserved the very young girl¹⁶ for the son of Gjúki.¹⁷
5. She¹⁸ had known no wrong in her life
and no injury in her allotted span,
[no] disgrace that was or that might be conceived.
Grim fates intervened in this.
6. Alone she sat outside in the evening of the day;
she started to speak about herself then, openly:¹⁹
‘I must have Sigurðr — or else he dies²⁰ —
the very young man, in my arms!
7. ‘The words I say now,²¹ I shall regret after this,²²
his wife is Guðrún, and I am Gunnarr’s;
loathsome Nornir²³ shaped long sufferings for us!’
8. Often she²⁴ goes outside, filled with evil,²⁵
ice-floes and icicles,²⁶ each evening,
when Guðrún and Sigurðr go to bed
and Sigurðr swathes her in bedclothes,
the Hunnish king, in order to caress his wife.

9. 'Vón geng ek vilja, vers ok beggja;
verð ek mik göela af grimmum hug!'
10. Nam af þeim heiptum hvetjask at vígi:
'Þú skalt, Gunnarr, gørst um láta
mínu landi ok mér sjálfri;
mun ek una aldri með qđling!'
11. 'Mun ek aprtr fara, þars ek áðan vark,
með nábornum niðjum mínum;
þar mun ek sitja ok sofa lífi,
nema þú Sigurð svelta látir
ok jøfur qđrum cedri verðir!'
12. 'Látum son fara feðr í sinni!
Skalat úlf ala ungan lengi!
Hveim verðr hölða hefnd léttari,
síðr til sátta, at sonr lifi.'
13. *Hryggr* varð Gunnarr ok hnippnaði;
sveip sínum hug, sat um allan dag;
hann vissi þat vilgi górla,
hvæt honum væri vinna soemst,
eða honum væri vinna bezt,
allz sìk Vølsung vissi firðan
ok at Sigurð sqknuð mikinn.
14. Ýmist hann hugði jafnlanga stund;
þat var eigi árar tittr
at frá konungdóm kvánir gengi;
nam hann sér Høgna heita at rúnum —
þar átti hann alls fulltrúa.
15. 'Ein er mér Brynhildr qllum betri,
um borin Buðla — hon er bragr kvenna!
Fyrr skal ek mínu fjørvi láta
en þeirar meyar meiðmum týna!'
16. 'Vildu okkr fylki til fjár véla?
Gott er at ráða Rínar málmi
ok unandi auði stýra
ok sitjandi sælu njóta!'
17. Einu því Høgni annsvor veitti:
'Samir eigi okkr slíkt at vinna,
sverði rofna svarna eiða,
eiða svarna, unnar tryggðoir!'

9. ‘I walk in want of joy and man both(?);²⁷
I must gratify myself with my grim heart!’²⁸
10. She began, out of those hatreds, to incite herself to slaying:
 ‘You, Gunnarr, shall entirely lose
 my land and me myself;
 I will never be happy with a nobleman!
11. ‘I will go back, to where I was before,
 among my close-born kinsmen;
 there I will sit and sleep my life [away],
 unless you let Sigurðr die²⁹
 and you become a boar³⁰ better than others!
12. ‘Let’s make the son depart³¹ in company with the father!³²
 One shouldn’t rear a young wolf for long!
 For every man,³³ vengeance becomes easier,
 [and] settlement³⁴ less [likely], if a son lives.’³⁵
13. Gunnarr became distressed³⁶ and hung his head;
he turned things over in his mind, sat all the day through;
 he didn’t know clearly what he desired,
 what would be most fitting for him to do,
 or would be best for him to do,
since he himself would feel robbed of the Völsungr³⁷
 and [feel] a great loss after Sigurðr.³⁸
14. He considered diverse options for an equally long time;
 it was not customary earlier³⁹
 that wives should depart from a kingdom;⁴⁰
he called Högri to him for a private conversation —
 there he had a faithful friend in all respects.
15. ‘To me, Brynhildr, born of Buðli, alone
is better than all [others] — she is the best of women!
 I shall relinquish my life before
 I lose that lady’s riches!
16. ‘Are you willing for us both to betray the marshal for money?
 It’s good⁴¹ to rule the Rín’s metal⁴²
 and, living contentedly, to command wealth
 and, sitting down, to savour good fortune!’
17. Only this did Högri give in reply:
‘It is not fitting for us two to do such [a thing],
 to tear apart sworn oaths with a sword,
 sworn oaths, pledged troths!

18. 'Vituma vit á moldu menn in sælli,
meðan fjórir vér fólkí ráðum
ok sá inn húnski her-Baldr lifir,
né in mætri mægð á moldu,
ef vér fimm sonu fœðum lengi,
áttum góða œxla knættim.
19. 'Ek veit górla, hvaðan vegir standa:
eru Brynhildar brek ofmikil!'
20. 'Vit skulum Guthorm gørva at vígi,
yngra bróður, ófróðara;
hann var fyr útan eiða svarna,
eiða svarna, unnar tryggðir!'
21. Dælt var at eggja óbilgjarnan:
stóð til hjarta hjørr Sigurði.
22. Réð til hefnnda hergjarn í sal
ok eptir varp óbilgjornum;
fló til Guthorms Grams ramliga
kynbirt járn ór konungs hendi.
23. Hné hans um dólgr til hluta tveggja:
hendr ok haufuð hné á annan veg,
en fótahlutr fell aptr í stað.
24. Sofnuð var Guðrún í sæingu,
sorga laus, hjá Sigurði;
en hon vaknaði vilja firð,
er hon Freys vinar flaut í dreyra.
25. Svá sló hon svárar sínar hendr
at rammhugaðr reis upp við beð:
'Grátaðu, Guðrún, svá grimmliga,
brúðr frumunga — þér brœðr lifa!
26. 'Á ek til ungan erfintjá —
kannat hann firrask ór fjándgarði;
þeir sér hafa, svárt ok dátt,
en nær numit, nýlig ráð.
27. 'Ríðra þeim síðan, þótt sjau alir,
systur sonr slíkr at þingi!
Ek veit górla hví gegnir nú:
ein veldr Brynhildr ɔllu bolvi!

18. 'We both know of no happier men on earth,
while we four⁴³ rule the people
and the Hunnish army-Baldr⁴⁴ lives,
nor of a worthier in-law relationship on earth,
[even] if we father, at length, five sons,
[if] we can produce good ones for our families.
19. 'I know for certain, whence these ways come:⁴⁵
Brynhildr's emotions are too extreme!'
- 20.⁴⁶ 'We two shall prepare Guthormr for the killing,
our younger, more unwise brother;
he was exempt from⁴⁷ the sworn oaths,
sworn oaths, pledged troths!'
21. It was easy to incite the unhesitant one:⁴⁸
a sword stood at Sigurðr's heart.⁴⁹
22. The battle-eager one⁵⁰ sought vengeance in the hall
and hurled [a weapon] after the unhesitant one;
Gramr's highly brightened iron⁵¹ flew towards Guthormr,
forcefully, from the king's hand.
23. His enemy⁵² sank in two parts:
hands and head⁵³ sank one way,
and the foot-part⁵⁴ fell backwards on the spot.
24. Guðrún had fallen asleep in bed,
free of sorrows, beside Sigurðr;
but she awoke robbed of joy,
as she floated in the blood of Freyr's friend.⁵⁵
25. She struck her heavy⁵⁶ hands [together] in such a way⁵⁷
that the strong-hearted one⁵⁸ raised himself up in bed:
'Don't weep, Guðrún, so grievously,
[my] very young bride — your brothers live!'
26. 'I have too young an heir —
he doesn't know how to distance himself from the enemy-court;
they have themselves a new course of action, heavy⁵⁹ and dire,
and it is nearly decided upon.'
27. 'No such sister's son, even if you bear seven,
will ride with them hereafter to the assembly!⁶⁰
I know for certain what [all this] means now:
Brynhildr alone is the cause of all [this] evil!'

28. 'Mér unni mær fyr mann hvern,
en við Gunnar grand ekki vannk;
þyrmða ek sifjum, svørnum eiðum,
síðr værak heitinn hans kvánar vinr!'
29. Kona varp ǫndu, en konungr fjørvi;
svá sló hon svára sinni hendi,
at kváðu við kálkar í vá
ok gullu við gæss í túni.
30. Hló þá Brynhildr, Buðla dóttir,
einu sinni, af ǫllum hug,
er hon til hvílu heyra knátti
gjallan grát Gjúka dóttur.
31. Hitt kvað þá Gunnarr, gramr haukstalda:
'Hlæraðu af því, heiptgjorn kona,
glöð á gólfí, at þér góðs viti!
Hví hafnar þú inum hvíta lit,
feikna fœðir? Hygg ek at feig sér!'
32. 'Þú værir þess verðust kvenna,
at fyr augum þér Atla hjoggim,
sæir brœðr þínum blóðugt sár,
undir dreyrgar, knættir yfir binda!'
33. 'Frýra maðr þér engi, Gunnarr: hefir þú fullvegit!
Lítt sésk Atli ófu þína;
hann mun ykkar ǫnd síðari
ok æ bera afl it meira.'
34. 'Segja mun ek þér, Gunnarr — sjálfr veiztu górla —
hvé ér yðr snemma til saka réðuð!
Varðkat ek til ung, né ofþruningi:
fullgøedd fé á fleti bróður.'
35. 'Né ek vilda þat, at mik verr ætti,
áðr þér Gjúkungar riðuð at garði,
þrír á hestum, þjóðkonungar;
en þeira fór þørfgi væri!'
- 36 [39]. 'Peim hétumk þá, þjóðkonungi
er með gulli sat á Grana bógum;
varat hann í augu yðr um líkr,
né á engi hlut at álitum —
þó þikkisk ér þjóðkonungar!'

28. 'The maiden loves me above every [other] man,
but I did no injury to Gunnarr;
I kept our kinship inviolate, our sworn oaths,
lest I should be called *his* wife's "friend"!⁶¹
29. The woman⁶² let out a sigh,⁶³ and the king his life;
she struck heavily with her hand,
so that the cups in the corner responded
and the geese in the home-meadow honked⁶⁴ in reply.⁶⁵
30. Then Brynhildr laughed, Buðli's daughter,
one time [only], with all her heart,⁶⁶
when she could hear from the bed
the shrill crying of Gjúki's daughter.
31. Then Gunnarr, prince of warriors,⁶⁷ said this:
'You're not laughing on account of this, hatred-eager woman,
glad on the floor, that you know of something good for you!
Why do you lose those white looks⁶⁸ [of yours],
fomenter of evils? I think that you're doomed!
32. 'You'd be the most worthy of women for this,
that before your eyes we should hack Atli down,
that you should see bloody wounds on your brother,
gory gashes, that you could bind up!'
- 33.⁶⁹ 'No one questions you,'⁷⁰ Gunnarr: you've fought enough!⁷¹
Little does Atli fear your enmity;
of the two of you, he'll bear the longer breath⁷²
and always the greater strength.
34. 'I will tell you, Gunnarr — you know it yourself clearly —
how you⁷³ decided on this strife of yours early!⁷⁴
I was not too young, nor too hard-pressed:⁷⁵
[I was] fully endowed with wealth on my brother's floor.
35. 'I didn't desire it, that a man should possess me,
before you Gjúkungar⁷⁶ rode into the courtyard,⁷⁷
three on horses,⁷⁸ people-kings;
but their⁷⁹ journey ought not to have occurred!⁸⁰
- 36 [39].⁸¹ 'I promised myself then to *that* one,⁸² to the people-king⁸³
who sat with gold on Grani's shoulders;⁸⁴
he was not alike to *you* in his eyes,
nor in any respect in appearance —
yet you think yourselves people-kings!⁸⁵

- 37 [36]. 'Ok mér Atli þat einni sagði,
 at hvárki létz hófn um deila,
 gull né jarðir, nema ek gefask létak,
 ok engi hlut auðins fjár,
 þá er mér jóðungri eigu seldi
 ok mér jóðungri ára talði.
- 38 [37]. 'Þá var á hvørpfum hugr minn um þat,
 hvárt ek skylda vega eða val fella,
 bøll í brynu, um bróður sǫk;
 þat myndi þá þjóðkunt vera,
 morgum manni at munar striði.
- 39 [38]. 'Létum síga sáttmál okkur —
 lék mér meirr í mun meiðmar þiggja,
 bauga rauða, burar Sigmundar;
 né ek annars manns aura vildak.
40. 'Unna einum, né ýmissum —
 bjóat um hverfan hug men-Skogul!
 Allt mun þat Atli eptir finna,
 er hann mína spyrr morðfør gørva,
41. at þeygi skal þunngeð kona
 annarrar ver aldri leiða;
 þá mun á hefndum harma minna!'
42. Upp reis Gunnarr, gramr verðungar,
 ok um háls konu hendr um lagði;
 gengu allir, ok þó ýmsir,
 af heilum hug, hana at letja.
43. Hratt af hálsi hveim þar sér;
 léta mann sik letja langrar gongu.
44. Nam hann sér Högnar hvetja at rúnum:
 'Seggi vil ek alla í sal ganga,
 þína með mínum — nú er þorf mikil —
 vita ef meini morðfør konu,
 unz, af méli, enn mein komi;
 þá látum því þarfar ráða.'
45. Einu því Högni andsvor veitti:
 'Letia maðr hana langrar gongu,
 þars hon aprborin aldri verði!
 Hon kröng of komsk fyr kné móður,
 hon æ borin óvilja til,
 morgum manni at móðtrega!'

- 37 [36]. 'And Atli said this to me alone,⁸⁶
 that he would not allow possessions to be shared,
 neither gold nor earth,⁸⁷ unless I let myself be given,⁸⁸
 and no part of the bestowed wealth,
of the property which he assigned me when I was very young⁸⁹
 and allotted⁹⁰ me when I was very young in years.⁹¹
- 38 [37]. 'Then my mind was in a muddle⁹² about this,
 whether I should fight and⁹³ fell warriors,⁹⁴
 bold in my mail-coat, for my brother's sake;
 that would then be widely known,
 for many a man an affliction of will.⁹⁵
- 39 [38]. 'We let an agreement settle between the two of us⁹⁶ —
a greater longing played on my mind,⁹⁷ to obtain the precious objects,
 the red arm-rings, of Sigmundr's son;⁹⁸
I didn't want another man's treasures.
40. 'I loved one [man],⁹⁹ not several —
the torc-Skogul¹⁰⁰ did not harbour a spinning heart!¹⁰¹
 Atli will find out all this afterwards,
 when he hears of *my* murder-journey¹⁰² in full,
41. that a single-minded¹⁰³ woman shall in no way
 accompany another's husband¹⁰⁴ in life,¹⁰⁵
then there will be [?] in acts of vengeance for my harms!¹⁰⁶
42. Up rose Gunnarr, prince of the retinue,
 and laid his arms around his wife's neck;
 they all went, and yet severally,¹⁰⁷
 with sincere heart, to dissuade her.
43. She thrust each one from her neck there;
she let no one dissuade her from the long journey.¹⁰⁸
44. He¹⁰⁹ urged Hogni to speak with him in secret:
 'I want all the men to go into the hall,
 yours with mine — now there's great necessity —
to see if they may keep the woman from her murder-journey,
 before, from this time [on], further misfortunes arise;¹¹⁰
 then let's decide what's necessary in this case.'
45. Only this did Hogni grant in answer:
'Let no one dissuade her from the long journey,
 [and] may she never be reborn from there!¹¹¹
 Awkward she came before her mother's knee,¹¹²
 she was always born for misery,
as a [source of] mood-sorrow for many a man!'

46. Hvarf sér óhróðugr andspilli frá,
þar er mörk menja meiðum deildi.
47. Leit hon um alla eigu sína,
soltnar þýjar ok salkonur;
gullbrynu smó — vara gott í hug —
áðr sik miðlaði mækis eggjum.
48. Hné við bólstri hon á annan veg,
ok hjørunduð hugði at ráðum:
49. 'Nú skulu ganga, þeir er gull vili
ok minna því at mér þiggja;
ek gef hverri um hroðit sigli,
bók ok blæju, bjartar váðir!'
50. Þogðu allir, hugðu at ráðum,
ok allir senn annsvør veittu:
'Cernar soltnar — munum enn lifa!
Verða salkonur scemð at vinna!'
51. Unz af hyggjandi hórskrýdd kona,
ung at aldri, orð viðr um kvað:
'Vilkat ek mann trauðan né torboenan
um óra sok aldri týna!'
52. 'Þó mun á beinum brenna yðrum
færi eyrir, þá er ér fram komið —
neitt Menju góð — mín at vitja!
53. 'Seztu niðr, Gunnarr! Mun ek segja þér
lífs ørvæna ljósa brúði;
munu yðvart far allt í sundi,
þótt ek hafa qndu látit!'
54. 'Sátt munuð it Guðrún, snemr en þú hyggir;
hefir kunn kona við konung,
daprar minjar at dauðan ver.
55. 'Þar er mær borin, móðir fœðir;
sú mun hvítari en inn heiði dagr,
Svanhildr, vera, sólar geisla.'

46. He¹¹³ turned downcast from the conversation,
to where the woodland of torcs¹¹⁴ was distributing treasures.
47. She looked over all her possessions,
her dead slave-girls and hall-women,¹¹⁵
she donned her gold mail-coat — she wasn't in good heart —
before she stabbed her middle with a sword's edges.
48. She sank against the bolster on one side,
and, sword-wounded, deliberated her decisions:
49. 'Now shall they come, those who want to accept
from me gold and lesser things than that;
I give each [woman] a [gold-]adorned item of jewelry,
an embroidered coverlet and a bed-cover, bright clothes!'
50. All fell silent, deliberated their decisions,¹¹⁶
and all gave answer at once:
'Enough¹¹⁷ have died — we shall live on!
Hall-women must do honourable work!'¹¹⁸
51. Until, in her wisdom, the linen-adorned woman,¹¹⁹
young in years, spoke words in response:
'I don't want a person [who is] reluctant or hard to persuade
to lose their life for our¹²⁰ sake!'
52. 'Yet there will burn on your bones
fewer treasures, when you go forth —
no goods of Menja¹²¹ — to visit me!'¹²²
53. 'Sit down, Gunnarr! I shall tell you
that your lustrous bride [is] without hope of life;
your voyage¹²³ won't all be in a sound,¹²⁴
even though I've given up breath!'¹²⁵
- 54.¹²⁶ 'You and Guðrún will be reconciled, sooner than you think;
the well-known woman will have,¹²⁷ along with the king,¹²⁸
sorrowful memories of the dead man.¹²⁹
55. 'Then a maiden will be born, her mother will raise her;
she, Svanhildr,¹³⁰ will be fairer¹³¹ than the shining day,
than a ray of the sun.

56. 'Gefa mundu Guðrúnu góðra nøkkurum,
 skeyti skœða skatna mengi;
 munat at vilja, versæl, gefin;
 hana mun Atli eiga ganga,
 of borinn Buðla, bróðir minn.
57. 'Margs á ek minnask, hvé við mik fóru,
 þá er mik sára svikna høfðuð;
 vaðin at vilja vark, meðan ek lifðak!
58. 'Muntu Oddrúnu eiga vilja,
 en þík Atli mun eigi láta;
 it munuð lúta á laun saman;
 hon mun þér unna, sem ek skyldak,
 ef okkr góð um skop gørði verða!
59. 'Þík mun Atli illu beita:
 mundu í ɔngan ormgarð lagiðr!
60. 'Þat mun ok verða þvígít lengra
 at Atli mun qndu týna,
 sælu sinni ok sona lífi,
 þvíat honum Guðrún grýmir á beð,
 snorþrum eggjum, af sárum hug.
61. 'Sœmri væri Guðrún, systir okkur,
 frumver sínum *fylgja dauðum*,
 ef henni gæfi góðra ráð,
 eða ætti hon hug oss um líkan!
62. 'Óqrt mæli ek nú, en hon eigi mun
 of óra sok aldri týna;
 hana munu hefja hávar bárur
 til Jónakrs óðalþorfu.
63. 'Eru í varúðum Jónakrs sonum;
 mun hon Svanhildi senda af landi,
 sína mey ok Sigurðar.
64. 'Hana munu bíta Bikka ráð,
 þvíat Jormunrekkr óþarf lifir;
 þá er ɔll farin ætt Sigurðar,
 eru Guðrúnar græti at fleiri.

56. 'You will give Guðrún to a certain good man,¹³²
 a damaging arrow for a multitude of men,¹³³
not according to her wishes, [or] husband-happy, will she be given;
 Atli will go to own¹³⁴ her,
 [the man] born of Buðli, my brother.
57. 'I have much to remember, how things went against me,
 when you¹³⁵ had betrayed me bitterly;¹³⁶
I was deprived of my wishes, while I lived!
58. 'You'll want to own¹³⁷ Oddrún,¹³⁸
 but Atli won't let you;
you two will incline together¹³⁹ in secret;
 she will love you, as I should [have],
if a good fate had been forthcoming for us!
59. 'Atli will persecute you with evil:
you'll be laid in a narrow snake-yard!
60. 'It will also come to pass not much later
 that Atli will lose his breath,¹⁴⁰
 his happiness and the life of his sons,
because Guðrún will besmear him in bed,¹⁴¹
 with sharp edges,¹⁴² out of wounded spirit.
61. 'It would be more seemly for Guðrún, our sister,¹⁴³
 to follow her first, dead husband,¹⁴⁴
if one were to give her good people's advice,
 or she had a spirit like ours!¹⁴⁵
62. 'Not hastily do I speak now, but she will not
 lose her life in line with our¹⁴⁶ wishes;
 high waves will carry her
 to Jónakr's¹⁴⁷ ancestral territory.
63. 'They¹⁴⁸ will be in the care of Jónakr's sons;
 she¹⁴⁹ will send Svanhildr from the land,
 her girl and Sigurðr's.¹⁵⁰
64. 'Bikki's counsels will bite her,¹⁵¹
 because Jormunrekkr¹⁵² lives to do evil;
when all of Sigurðr's family has passed [away],
 Guðrún's griefs will be the more.

65. 'Biðja mun ek þík bœnar einnar,
sú mun í heimi hinzt boen vera:
láttu svá breiða borg á velli,
at undir oss öllum jafnrúmt sé,
þeim er sultu með Sigurði!
66. 'Tjaldi þar um þá borg tjoldum ok skjoldum,
valarift vel fáð ok Vala mengi;
brenni mér inn húnska á hlið aðra.
67. 'Brenni inum húnska á hlið aðra
mína þjóna, menjum gófga,
tveir at hófðum, ok tveir haukar;
þá er öllu skipt til jafnaðar.
68. 'Liggi okkar enn í milli málmr hringvariðr,
egghvast járn, svá endr lagit,
þá er vit bæði beð einn stigum
ok hétum þá hjóna nafni.
69. 'Hrynya honum þá á hael þeygi
hlunnblik hallar, hringi litkuð,
ef honum fylgir ferð míin heðan —
þeygi mun vár fyr aumlig vera!
70. 'Þvíat honum fylgja fimm ambóttir,
áttu þjónar, eðlum góðir,
fóstrman mitt, ok faðerni,
þat er Buðli gaf barni sínu.
71. 'Mart sagða ek, mynda ek fleira,
ef mér meirr mjótuðr málrúm gæfi;
ómun þverr, undir svella,
satt eitt sagðak — svá mun ek láta!'

65. 'I will make only one request of you,
it will be my last request in this world:
let a stronghold¹⁵³ be prepared on the plain,
so that it's¹⁵⁴ equally roomy for us all,
for those who died with Sigurðr!¹⁵⁵
66. 'Let the stronghold be hung with tapestries and shields,
well-coloured foreign cloth and a multitude of Valir,¹⁵⁶
let the Hunnish man¹⁵⁷ be burnt with me on one side.
67. 'Let there be burned on the other side of the Hunnish man
my servants, made stately with torcs,
two at his head, and two hawks;
then it will be arranged as is fitting in all [respects].
68. 'Let there also lie between us the ring-adorned metal,¹⁵⁸
the edge-sharp iron, as it was once laid,
when we both climbed into one bed
and were then called by the name of married couple.
69. 'The hall's roller-gleams,¹⁵⁹ decorated with a ring,
won't then close on his heel with a clang,¹⁶⁰
if my entourage accompanies him hence —
our journey won't be at all wretched!
70. 'For five handmaidens accompany him,
[and] eight servants, of good origin,
my slaves who grew up with me, and my patrimony,
that which Buðli gave to his child.
71. 'I have said much, I would [say] more,
if fate should give me more speech-time;
my voice fades, my wounds swell,
I have spoken only truth — thus shall I expire!'

Textual Apparatus to *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*

Sigurðarkviða in skamma] This title is not in R; it is supplied editorially

Kviða Sigurðar] This rubricated, but faded, heading is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this reading is therefore reliant on the transcription therein

1/1 Ár] The first letter is large, inset and rubricated, but faded

4/1 Seggr] R Segvrr

12/7 síðr] R sib', which may alternatively be an abbreviation of síðan 'then, later'

15/3 hon er] After these words, the words *bvdla broþir minn* are erased in R (cf. 56/9–10)

13/1 Hryggr] R reiðr 'angry'; the emendation provides alliteration

23/5 fótahlutr] R fota lvtr

25/1 hon] R h' (which otherwise stands for *hann*)

29/3 svára] R svárar

33/7 bera] R vera

36/2 þjóðkonungi] R absent

36/7 hlut] R lvt

36/6] A drawing of a dragon's head appears at the foot of the page in R

37/4 høfn um] R høfnum

37/7 hlut] R lvt

37/10 eigu] R eiga

37/10 seldi] R selldak

38/1 hvorfüm] R hvorfo with a macron above the second 'o'

43/2 hveim] R heim

51/3 ung] R óng

52/5 neitt] R neit (with e caudata)

60/6 sona] R sofa

60/9 eggjum] R egiom

61/4 fylgja dauðum] R absent

61/5 henni] R henði

67/2 á] R absent

69/8 vera] Corrected from *þiccia* (i.e., *þikkja* 'seem') in R

71/3 ef] R er

Notes to the Translation

- 1 I.e., it was long ago.
- 2 Or ‘Gjúki’s (hall)’.
- 3 Sigurðr, not Gjúki.
- 4 Or ‘when he had slain’. Either way, this is presumably a reference to Sigurðr’s killing of Fáfnir or the sons of Hundingr.
- 5 Sigurðr.
- 6 Gunnarr and Högni.
- 7 For another account of the events of this stanza and the next, see *Hlr.* 11–12.
- 8 Probably Gunnarr and Högni.
- 9 I.e., the route. It is unclear whether this means that Sigurðr had previously visited Brynhildr or her foster-father, and whether Sigurðr and Brynhildr had then been betrothed; cf. *Sg.* 36 [39]. Alternatively, translate ‘and he knew how to fight/kill’.
- 10 Presumably Sigurðr.
- 11 I.e., married Brynhildr. It is likely that Sigurðr and the others went to ask for Brynhildr’s hand on behalf of Gunnarr.
- 12 This visit is probably also the subject of *Sg.* 35.
- 13 Presumably Sigurðr, who has probably adopted the appearance of Gunnarr to fool Brynhildr.
- 14 Either a sword with a damascened blade or one marked with colourful signs or runes. Cf. *FSk.* 23.
- 15 Sigurðr. It seems that *Hún(n)* ‘Hun’ and *húnskr* ‘Hunnish’, originally terms for the historical Huns (as in *Akv.*), subsequently came to describe a non-Nordic people, family, person or land of southerness or exotic ferocity. In VS 2, Sigurðr’s grandfather, Volsungr, is *konungr yfir Húnalandi* ‘king over Húnaland’.
- 16 She is actually a young woman.
- 17 Gunnarr.
- 18 Brynhildr.
- 19 This line lacks alliteration in the Old Norse. Suggested emendations include replacing *bert* ‘openly’ with *albert* ‘entirely openly’ or *þrt* ‘quickly’.
- 20 I.e., otherwise, Brynhildr will kill him or have him killed.
- 21 I.e., those she has just uttered, or at least including them.
- 22 Possibly Brynhildr reflects that, since she cannot have Sigurðr in life, she must regretfully fulfil her prophecy that he will die.
- 23 The Northern Fates.
- 24 Brynhildr. Later in this stanza, ‘her’ refers to Guðrún.
- 25 Or ‘harm’.
- 26 Or ‘glaciers’. The ice is metaphorical. Another possible rendering is ‘filled with the harm of ice-floes and icicles’.
- 27 The translation of this line is uncertain.
- 28 Or ‘spirit’, ‘mind’.

- 29 I.e., unless you cause him to die.
- 30 When not denoting an actual boar, *jofurr* is, as here, a common metaphor for ‘warrior’ or ‘prince’.
- 31 I.e., to Hel. Alternatively, ‘Let’s make the son die’.
- 32 The son is the child of Sigurðr and Guðrún. He is elsewhere named Sigmundr.
- 33 I.e., for every dead man. The literal sense is ‘for each one of men’.
- 34 I.e., peaceful settlement in exchange for material compensation.
- 35 The interpretation of the second half of this stanza is disputed.
- 36 Replacement of the manuscript reading *reiðr* ‘angry’ with *hryggr* ‘distressed’ provides alliteration and appears more in keeping with the sense of the rest of this stanza. Another possible substitution is *hugsjúkr*, literally ‘heart/mind-sick’, as in the corresponding prose passage in VS 32: *Gunnarr varð nú mjók hugsjúkr* ‘Gunnarr now became very sick at heart’. Alternatively, again, if *reiðr* is kept (cf. Prk. 13), *hnipaði* might be emended to *glúpnaði* ‘lost heart’ or ‘became afraid’, but the combination of wrath with fearfulness would not be convincing.
- 37 Sigurðr.
- 38 I.e., after Sigurðr was dead.
- 39 I.e., in those days.
- 40 I.e., that queens should leave kings. Gunnarr is worried that Brynhildr will leave him.
- 41 Or ‘It will be good’.
- 42 Gold, here from Fáfnir’s hoard, which, ultimately at least, is deposited in the *Rín* ‘Rhine’ (see Akv. 27); the reference to the Rhine may therefore be proleptic here.
- 43 Possibly Gunnar, Högni, Guthormr and Sigurðr.
- 44 I.e., warlord—here Sigurðr. He is here identified with the innocent god Baldr, for whose killing see Vsp. 31–32.
- 45 Literally, ‘ways stand’.
- 46 That it is Gunnarr who speaks this stanza is apparent from VS 32.
- 47 Literally, ‘he was on the outside of’.
- 48 Guthormr.
- 49 The presence of only a half-stanza here may not indicate the loss of a second half, but rather the poet’s deliberate choice in order to provide a dramatic pause.
- 50 Sigurðr.
- 51 Gramr is Sigurðr’s sword.
- 52 Guthormr.
- 53 Or ‘arms and head’; the reference is to the upper half of Guthormr’s body.
- 54 Or ‘leg-part’; either way, the bottom half of Guthormr’s body.
- 55 Sigurðr. According to Ls. 37, Freyr was the god who made no women weep.
- 56 I.e., heavy with sorrow.
- 57 Striking the hands together was an old Germanic gesture of female grief; cf. Gðr. I 1.
- 58 Sigurðr.

- 59 I.e., grievous.
- 60 I.e., they plan to kill Sigmundr, the best son that Guðrún could ever have.
- 61 I.e., lover.
- 62 Guðrún.
- 63 Literally, 'threw breath'.
- 64 Literally, 'yelled'.
- 65 Cf. *Gđr. I* 16.
- 66 Cf. *Br. 9* [10].
- 67 Literally, perhaps, 'of hawk-bearers'; see also the definition of this word in B. La Farge and J. Tucker, *Glossary to the Poetic Edda: Based on Hans Kuhn's Kurzes Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992).
- 68 I.e., fair complexion.
- 69 Brynhildr speaks.
- 70 I.e., questions your courage.
- 71 Brynhildr appears sarcastic, as Gunnarr did not fight Sigurðr but instead sent Guthormr to murder him; in her view, Gunnarr has fought enough for everyone to know his limitations. However, the prose paraphrase of this stanza in VS 32 has Brynhildr remark: '*Engi frýr at eigi sé fullvegit*' '"No one will complain that there's not been enough killing".'
- 72 I.e., he will live longer.
- 73 Pl.
- 74 According to Brynhildr's account in VS 31, Gunnar and his brothers had threatened to attack unless she were betrothed to Gunnarr. Cf. *Sg. 38* [37].
- 75 Or perhaps 'too bursting (with pride)'.
- 76 'Descendants of Gjúki'.
- 77 *Sg. 3* probably refers to the same event.
- 78 Gunnarr, Högni, and either Guthormr or Sigurðr.
- 79 Still referring to the three.
- 80 Literally, 'but their journey was not necessary'.
- 81 The bracketed numbers indicate the order in which the editors of *NK*, among others, assuming some textual confusion, believe the stanzas should be read. This rather obscure part of the poem is clearly related to Brynhildr's retrospective account of events at the start of VS 31.
- 82 Sigurðr. Whether this was a formal, public betrothal or a private matter (perhaps known only to Brynhildr herself) is uncertain.
- 83 Or 'great king'.
- 84 I.e., Grani's back.
- 85 Or 'great kings'.
- 86 When Atli said this is unclear.
- 87 I.e., land.
- 88 I.e., in marriage, presumably to Gunnarr.
- 89 Literally, 'child-young'.

- 90 Literally, ‘tallied for’.
- 91 Some editors emend *ára* to *aura*; the line then means ‘and the treasures he allotted me when I was very young’.
- 92 Literally, ‘my mind was in turns’. Alternatively, *hvørfon* ‘wavering’, ‘doubt’.
- 93 Literally ‘or’.
- 94 Literally, ‘fell the slain’. The warriors are probably the Gjúkungar, who had threatened to attack if Brynhildr were not betrothed to Gunnarr; cf. *Sg.* 34 and *VS* 31.
- 95 This could mean either that Brynhildr’s fighting would be contrary to the wishes of many (especially those she kills), or that it would spark love-sickness for her in many men.
- 96 Brynhildr and Atli. The nature of the agreement is unclear.
- 97 Literally, ‘on me’.
- 98 Sigurðr.
- 99 Sigurðr.
- 100 A term for ‘woman’, *Skögul* being a valkyrie-name. Brynhildr, a valkyrie, refers to herself.
- 101 I.e., a capricious heart. Cf. *Háv.* 84.
- 102 Suicide.
- 103 Or perhaps ‘narrow-minded’ or ‘weak-minded’ (here used ironically), the literal sense being ‘thin-minded’. Brynhildr apparently describes herself as such.
- 104 Probably Sigurðr, Guðrún’s husband.
- 105 This passage, in what is probably an incomplete stanza, is rather hard to interpret. It may, however, relate to an episode in *VS* 31 in which Sigurðr proposes to leave Guðrún and take up with Brynhildr, an offer Brynhildr rejects because she would sooner die than deceive Gunnarr.
- 106 The end of this stanza appears faulty.
- 107 I.e., each in turn.
- 108 I.e., to the afterlife.
- 109 Gunnarr.
- 110 Alternatively, ‘further misfortune arises’.
- 111 Cf. the concluding prose to *HH. II* and *HHv.*; also *Vsp.* 21.
- 112 I.e., she was born wayward.
- 113 Gunnarr.
- 114 A kenning for ‘woman’, here Brynhildr.
- 115 These females presumably either committed suicide or were killed in order to accompany Brynhildr to the afterlife. Cf. *Sg.* 65.
- 116 Or ‘deliberated about decisions’. In the Old Norse, it appears that *h-* alliterates with a vowel (*a-*).
- 117 I.e., enough women.
- 118 They claim they have important work to do, for which they must live.
- 119 Brynhildr.
- 120 Brynhildr uses the royal ‘we’.

- 121 A kenning for ‘gold’, Menja (*men* ‘torc’) being a giantess who ground gold from a magical millstone, according to the Eddic poem *Grottasöng*.
- 122 I.e., in the afterlife.
- 123 Or ‘ship’. Either way, the reference is metaphorical.
- 124 I.e., you will have to venture out into the dangerous waters of the open sea; in other words, trouble lies ahead.
- 125 I.e., died.
- 126 Events mentioned in Brynhildr’s dying prophecy relate to those in subsequent poems in R.
- 127 Or ‘has’.
- 128 This could refer either to Gunnarr or the Danish King Hálfr with whom Guðrún stayed after Sigurðr’s death (see *Göt. II* 13 and VS 34).
- 129 Sigurðr.
- 130 ‘Swan Battle’, daughter of Guðrún and Sigurðr.
- 131 Literally, ‘whiter’.
- 132 Literally, ‘to a certain one of good (men)’.
- 133 Guðrún’s marriage to Atli results in multiple deaths. However, the interpretation of this line is uncertain.
- 134 I.e., marry.
- 135 Pl.
- 136 Brynhildr presumably refers to Gunnarr’s deceitful exchange of appearance with Sigurðr in order to win her, a deception in which she may consider other members of Gunnarr’s family complicit.
- 137 I.e., marry.
- 138 ‘(Weapon-)Point Rune’, sister of Atli and Brynhildr. See *Od.*
- 139 I.e., embrace.
- 140 I.e., breathe his last.
- 141 I.e., cover him in his own blood.
- 142 Sword-edges.
- 143 As Gunnarr’s sister, Guðrún is Brynhildr’s sister-in-law.
- 144 Sigurðr.
- 145 Brynhildr uses the royal ‘we’.
- 146 Brynhildr’s.
- 147 King Jónakr becomes Guðrún’s second husband. The etymology of his name is obscure.
- 148 Presumably Guðrún and Svanhildr, her daughter by Sigurðr. This stanza may be missing its first line.
- 149 Guðrún.
- 150 Svanhildr will be sent to marry the Gothic King Jórmunrekkr.
- 151 Bikki, whose name probably means ‘Bitch’ or ‘(Son of) a Bitch’, was a counsellor of Jórmunrekkr. He falsely led Jórmunrekkr to believe that Svanhildr was having an affair with Jórmunrekkr’s son, Randvér, whereupon the king had Randvér hanged and Svanhildr trampled to death by horses.

- 152 'Immensely Mighty One'; he appears as *Eormanric* and *Eormenric* in Old English, *Ermanaricus* in Latin. Historically, Ermanaric was a fourth-century Ostrogothic king.
- 153 Or 'pyre'.
- 154 Or 'have a stronghold (built) so broad on the plain that it's ...'.
- 155 Presumably the dead females mentioned in *Sg. 47*.
- 156 Literally, 'Welsh' (slaves), but the term encompasses any foreign slaves.
- 157 *Sigurðr*.
- 158 A sword with a ring-hilt.
- 159 Perhaps shining metal door-hinges or decorated door-wings.
- 160 Or perhaps just close on his heel. Either way, the idea is that there will be other people behind *Sigurðr*.

Helreið Brynhildar

Helreið Brynhildar (*Hlr.*) ‘Brynhildr’s Hel-Ride [i.e., Ride to Hel]’ is a short, though not certainly complete, poem in *fornyrðislag*. It survives in both **R** (fol. 36r–v) and, without st. 7, in chapter 9 of *Norna-Gests þátr* ‘The Tale of Norna-Gestr’.¹ The latter work, probably composed in the early fourteenth century, has a somewhat different and fuller prose introduction, as well as many variant readings to the stanzas, the most significant of which are quoted and translated in the notes to the translation.²

Hlr. is thought to be one of the more recent poems in **R** relating to the death of Sigurðr. It is a dialogue between Brynhildr, who instigated his killing, and an unnamed giantess (*gýgr*) whom Brynhildr encounters while travelling in a funeral carriage on the road to Hel.³ The meeting is antagonistic, in common with other encounters between a visitor to this land of the dead and a guardian of the way or entrance thereto. It broadly parallels, for example, Óðinn’s meeting with a barking hellhound in *BDr.*; the hostile encounter between Skírnir and a herdsman in *FSk.*; the challenging of Hermóðr by a maiden called Móðguðr in *SnEGylf* (49, p. 47); and the hero’s violent encounter with Grendel’s mother in the Old English *Beowulf*. In those cases, however, the visitor is alive and therefore unwelcome, whereas the Brynhildr of *Hlr.* appears, judging from the prose preface, to be dead.⁴ In this case, the hostility may arise because Brynhildr’s carriage trespassed across the giantess’s home field, or less trivially because (according to *Norna-Gests þátr*) the giantess herself had affection for Sigurðr.

In the aforementioned parallels each short-stay visitor to the Otherworld seeks entry alone. Groups of people seeking permanent residence could, however, apparently enter Hel together, as Móðguðr, guardian of a bridge on the road to Hel, informs Hermóðr of five battalions of dead men who had recently passed by (*SnEGylf* 49, p.

1 *FSN I*, 332–39.

2 In lieu of a modern critical edition of *Norna-Gests þátr*, for further details, see NK and K. von See, B. La Farge, E. Picard, K. Schulz and M. Teichert, *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, Bd. 6: *Heldenlieder* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2009).

3 In Germanic tradition, the concept of ‘riding’ to the afterlife is also implicit in the ‘riding’ of a gallows by the hanged, and by Óðinn’s eight-legged horse, Sleipnir. In *Vsp.* 51, people also take the Hel-Way, but on foot.

4 Although in *Norna-Gests þátr* she has yet to be cremated. One scholar considers that ‘the words of the *gýgr* in the poem suggest that Brynhildr is still alive on her journey, still with the option of turning back to re-enter the world of the living’; see J. Quinn, ‘Scenes of Vindication: Three Icelandic Heroic Poems in Relation to the Continental Traditions of *Piðreks saga af Bern* and the *Nibelungenlied*’, in E. Mundal, ed., *Medieval Nordic Literature in Its European Context* (Oslo: Dreyer, 2015), pp. 78–125 at 94.

47). Brynhildr similarly seeks permanent residence in Hel, but appears to journey alone, except presumably for the horses (never mentioned) that draw her wagon. Her apparent solitude is striking, but not wholly unprepared for. In *Sg.*, the women of her household, whom she had invited to join her on the pyre, had all made the same awkward excuse for not doing so (*Sg.* 50), and others of her servants seem, according to her stipulations, associated rather with Sigurðr in death (*Sg.* 67, 70). Nevertheless, Brynhildr had clearly intended that she, they and he would be cremated within the same 'stronghold' and would thus journey to the afterlife together. It does, however, appear from the giantess's assertion that Brynhildr should not be visiting another's husband (i.e., Sigurðr, husband of Guðrún) that Sigurðr—despite avenging himself in *Sg.* 22–23 and being 'chosen' by a valkyrie (Brynhildr herself)—does await her in Hel. From the perspective of all except Brynhildr and the enemies of the gods, this is a tragic end for the North's greatest warrior, whom Óðinn would surely have wanted to receive in Valholl as the foremost of his *einherjar*.

Depending on one's viewpoint, the verses of *Hlr.* (none of which are quoted or paraphrased in *VS*), either supply further evidence of Brynhildr's arrogance, egotism and determination to cast herself as the victim of events, or give a grievously wronged woman an opportunity to voice her mitigations. Either way, they also provide brief and obscure details—perhaps invented by this poet—of her childhood as a likely swan-maiden. These are combined with an account, possibly influenced by the valkyrie Sigdrífa in *Sd.*, of how she had disobeyed Óðinn by killing an old warrior called Hjálm-Gunnarr, rather than the young brother of a certain Auða, perhaps because she had sworn oaths (of betrothal?) to the latter.

Synopsis (Codex Regius)

Prose: As she drove in her carriage on the way to Hel, the dead Brynhildr came to where a certain giantess lived. They exchanged hostile words, which are recorded in the following poem.

Verse: The giantess denies Brynhildr passage and declares it unfitting for her to visit another woman's husband (i.e., Sigurðr, Guðrún's spouse). She adds that Brynhildr is fickle and has washed blood from her hands (1–2). Brynhildr retorts that, even if she once lived the life of a viking, she will always appear the better of the two of them, based on her lineage (3). The giantess declares that Brynhildr was ill-starred and the ruin of Gjúki's children (4). Brynhildr responds by telling how Gjúki's heirs made her a loveless oath-breaker (5). A courageous king (identity uncertain) once took her skin-garment (which possibly transformed her into a swan) and those of her sisters and put them under an oak. She adds that she was twelve when she swore oaths to a young prince (identity uncertain) (6). She states that she was formerly known as *Hildr* 'Battle', a valkyrie-name, (7), and that (as presumably one of Óðinn's valkyries) she once killed an old man called Hjálm-Gunnarr, rather than the young brother of Auða.

She did so in defiance of Óðinn, who became extremely angry with her (8). He shut her up in a shield-enclosed fortress surrounded by fire, put her to sleep, and stipulated that only one man would ride over the flames and break her slumber—the fearless man who brought her gold from the hoard of the snake Fáfnir (9–10). That man (Sigurðr), she says, appeared better than all others (11), and they slept together chastely for eight nights (12). Nevertheless, Guðrún upbraided her for that, and Brynhildr learned that Sigurðr and Gunnarr had tricked her (presumably by exchanging shapes) (13). She concludes by asserting that women and men keep themselves alive too long in the face of great adversity, but that she and Sigurðr will be together (in the afterlife). With that, she rudely commands the giantess to sink (14).

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Helreið Brynhildar

Eptir dauða Brynhildar váru góð bál tvau, annat Sigurði, ok brann þat fyrr, en Brynhildr var á qðru brend, ok var hon í reið, þeiri er guðvefjum var tjolduð. Svá er sagt at Brynhildr ók með reiðinni á Helveg ok fór um tún, þar er gýgr nokkur bjó. Gýgrin kvað:

Brynhildr reið Helveg

1. 'Skaltu í gógnum ganga eigi
grjóti studda garða mína!
Betr semði þér borða at rekja,
heldr en vitja vers annarrar!
2. 'Hvat skaltu vitja af Vallandi,
hvarfúst hófuð, húsa minna?
Þú hefir, Vár gulls, ef þík vita lystir,
mild, af hóndum manns blóð þvegit!'
3. 'Bregðu eigi mér, brúðr ór steini,
þótt ek værak í víkingu!
Ek mun okkar œðri þíkkja,
hvars menn eðli okkart kunnu!'
4. 'Þú vart, Brynhildr, Buðla dóttir,
heilli verstu í heim borin:
þú hefir Gjúka um glatað børnum
ok búi þeira brugðit góðu!'
5. 'Ek mun segja þér, svinn ór reiðu,
vitlaussi mjök, ef þík vita lystir,
hvé gørðu mik Gjúka arfar
ástalausa ok eiðrofa!'
6. 'Lét hami vára hugfullr konungr,
átta systra, undir eik borit;
var ek vetra tólf, ef þík vita lystir,
er ek ungum gram eiða seldak.'
7. 'Hétu mik allir í Hlymdólum
Hildi undir hjálmi — hvern er kunni.
8. 'Þá lét ek gamlan á Goðþjóðu
Hjálm-Gunnar næst Heljar ganga;
gaf ek ungum sigr Auðu bróður —
þar varð mér Óðinn ofreiðr um þat.

Brynhildr's Hel-Ride

After Brynhildr's death two pyres were built, one for Sigurðr, and it burnt first, and Brynhildr was burnt on the other, and she was in a wagon which was hung with valuable cloths. It is said that Brynhildr drove with the wagon on the Hel-way¹ and passed across a home-meadow,² where a certain giantess lived. The giantess said:³

Brynhildr Rode the Hel-Way

1. 'You shall not pass through
my courts supported by stone!⁴
It would befit you better to weave braid-trimmings,⁵
rather than to visit another's husband!⁶

- 2.⁷ 'Why must you visit, from Valland,⁸
fickle-head,⁹ my houses?
You have, generous¹⁰ Vár of gold,¹¹ if you wish to know,
washed man's blood from your hands!'

3. 'Don't you upbraid me, bride from the stone,¹²
even if I was¹³ on a viking voyage!¹⁴
I will seem the better of us both,
wherever people know about our origins!'

4. 'You, Brynhildr, daughter of Buðli,
were born to the worst luck in the world:
you have ruined Gjúki's children
and destroyed their good dwellings!'¹⁵

5. 'I, wise, from the wagon,¹⁶ will tell you,
very witless one, if you wish to know,¹⁷
how Gjúki's heirs made me
loveless and an oath-breaker!¹⁸

- 6.¹⁹ 'A courageous king²⁰ had our skin-garments,²¹
[those of] eight sisters, borne beneath an oak;
I was twelve years old, if you wish to know,
when I gave oaths to the young prince.²²

- 7.²³ 'They all called me in Hlymdalir²⁴
"Hildr under helm"²⁵ — each who knew me.

- 8.²⁶ 'Then, in Goðbjóð,²⁷ I let²⁸ the old Hjálm-Gunnarr²⁹
go to Hel next;
I gave victory to Auða's young brother³⁰ —
there Óðinn became extremely angry with me about that.

9. 'Lauk hann mik skjoldum í Skatalundi,
rauðum ok hvítum — randir snurtu;
þann bað hann slíta svefni mínum,
er hvergi lands hræðask kynni.
10. 'Lét um sal minn sunnanverðan
hávan brenna her alls viðar;
þar bað hann einn þegn yfir at riða,
þanns mér feerði gull, þats und Fáfni lá.
11. 'Reið góðr Grana, gullmiðlandi,
þars fóstri minn fletjum stýrði;
einn þótti hann þar qllum betri,
víkingr Dana, í verðungu.
12. 'Sváfu vit ok unðum í sæing einni,
sem hann minn bróðir um borinn væri;
hvártki knátti hond yfir annat
áttu nóttum okkart leggja.
13. 'Því brá mér Guðrún, Gjúka dóttir,
at ek Sigurði svæfak á armi;
þár varð ek þess vís, er ek vildigak,
at þau véltu mik í verfangi!
14. 'Munu við ofstríð alls til lengi
konur ok karlar kvíkvir fœðask!
Vit skulum okkrum aldri slíta,
Sigurðr, saman! Søkkstu, gýgjarkyn!'

9. 'He³¹ enclosed me with shields in Skatalundr,³²
red and white ones — the rims touched;³³
that man he commanded to break my sleep
who knew how to fear nowhere on land.³⁴
- 10.³⁵ 'About my hall, situated in the south,³⁶
he³⁷ let burn the high harrier of all wood,³⁸
there he ordered one thane only to ride over it,³⁹
the one who fetched me gold, that which lay under Fáfnir.
- 11.⁴⁰ 'The good one, the gold distributor,⁴¹ rode Grani
to where my foster-father governed benches;⁴²
he alone⁴³ appeared better than all [others] there,
a viking of the Danir,⁴⁴ in the entourage.⁴⁵
12. 'We two⁴⁶ slept and were content in one bed,
as if he'd been born my brother;
neither of us laid arm over the other
for eight nights.⁴⁷
13. 'For that, Guðrún, daughter of Gjúki, upbraided me,
[said] that I had slept in Sigurðr's arms;
there I became wise to that which I didn't want [to know],
that they tricked me in husband-taking!⁴⁸
14. 'Against extreme adversity, all too long
will women and men keep themselves alive!⁴⁹
We two shall tear up *our* lives together,⁵⁰
Sigurðr! Sink,⁵¹ giantess-spawn!'⁵²

Textual Apparatus to *Helreið Brynhildar*

Helreið Brynhildar] This title is not in R; it is supplied editorially, following modern convention

Brynhildr reið Helveg] These rubricated words are illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this reading is therefore reliant on the transcription therein

11/1 *Reið*] R *Reiþr*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 The road to Hel, land of the dead.
- 2 Or ‘enclosed field’, ‘courtyard’.
- 3 In chapter 9 of *Norna-Gests þáttr* (FSN I, 332–39) the prose introduction to this poem reads: *Þá spurðu menn Gest, hvert Brynhildr hefði nokkut kveðit dauð; hann kvað þat satt vera; þeir báðu hann kveða, ef hann kynni. Þá mælti Gestr: ‘Þá er Brynhildi var ekit til brennunnar á Helveg, ok var farit með hana nær hömrum nokkurum, þar bjó ein gýgr; hún var úti fyrir hellis dyrum, ok var í skinnkirtli, and svört yfirlits; hún hefir í hendi sér skógarvönd lángan, ok mælti: “Pessu vil ek beina til brennu þinnar, Brynhildr!” Segir gýgr “ok væri betr, at þú værir lifandi brend fyrir ódaðir þínar þær, at þú lézt drepa Sigurð Fáfnisbana, svá ágætan mann, ok opt var ek honum sinnuð, ok fyrir þat skal ek hljóða á þík með hefndar orðum þeim, at öllum sér þú at leiðari, er slíkt heyra frá þér sagt.” Eptir þat hljóðast þær á, Brynhildr ok gýgr. Gýgr kvað: ...’* ‘Then people asked Gestr [the tale’s protagonist] whether Brynhildr had said anything when she was dead; he said that it was true; they asked him to recite it, if he knew it. Then Gestr said: “When Brynhildr was driven to the burning on the Hel-Way, and it [i.e., the wagon] had come with her near to some cliffs, a giantess was living there; she was outside in front of the cave’s doors, and she was in a skin-kirtle, and she was black in appearance; she has in her hand a long forest’s wand [i.e., a long wooden stick], and she said: ‘I want to contribute this to your burning, Brynhildr!’ The giantess says ‘and it would have been better that you were burnt while living before those misdeeds of yours, in which you had Sigurðr Fáfnisbani slain—such a famous man, and I was often favourably disposed to him, and for that reason I shall sound off at you with vengeful words, so that you may be the more loathed by all who hear such things said about you.’ After that they sounded off at each other, Brynhildr and the giantess. The giantess said:”
- 4 Giants live in rocks.
- 5 For a tapestry.
- 6 I.e., Sigurðr, Guðrún’s husband. In place of *vers annarrar* ‘another’s husband’, the corresponding stanza in *Norna-Gests þáttr* 9 (cited by chapter) has *vorra ranna* ‘our halls’.
- 7 *Norna-Gests þáttr* 9’s variant version of this stanza reads: *‘Hvat skaltu vitja af Vallandi, / hverflyndt höfuð húsa minna? / Þú hefir vörgum, / ef þík vita lystir, / mörgum til matar manns hold gefit’* “Why must you visit, from Valland, fickle-head, my houses? You have, if you [want] to know, given man’s flesh as food to many wolves.”
- 8 ‘Land of the Slain’ (where valkyries such as Brynhildr may be found) or ‘Foreign Land’. Often the term specifically denotes France, though that meaning seems unlikely here.
- 9 A dig at Brynhildr’s links with multiple suitors.
- 10 The giantess is presumably being sarcastic.

- 11 A kenning for '(wealthy) woman'. Vár was a goddess of oaths, private contracts between men and women, and marriage; cf. *Prk.* 30.
- 12 A likely kenning for 'giantess'. 'Bride' may be sarcastic.
- 13 I.e., was formerly.
- 14 People tended to be killed on such expeditions, but Brynhildr's response appears evasive, given that she has just instigated the murder of Sigurðr.
- 15 In *Norna-Gests þáttr* 9 the second half of this stanza reads: '*pú hefir of glatat börnum ok búi, / ok þeirra brugðit góðu gamni*' "you have ruined children and dwellings, and destroyed their goods for sport."
- 16 Brynhildr's failure to descend from her wagon to address the giantess appears insulting, and *ór reiðu* 'from the wagon' might also pun on *ór reiði* 'out of wrath'. The translation somewhat obscures the contrast between *svinn ór reiðu* 'wise [one] from the wagon' here and *brúðr ór steini* 'bride from the stone' in *Hlr.* 3.
- 17 In *Norna-Gests þáttr* 9 the first half of this stanza reads: '*Ek mun segja þér sanna ræðu, / véljarnt höfuð, ef þik vita lystir*' "I will say to you true speech, trick-eager head, if you want to know."
- 18 In the next stanza Brynhildr mentions oaths she made to a young prince, but the passage is obscure. Brynhildr also broke her oath to marry the man (Sigurðr) who crossed the flames surrounding her chamber.
- 19 The first half of the corresponding stanza in *Norna-Gests þáttr* 9 reads: '*Lét mik af harmi hugfullr konungr / Atla systur undir eyk búa*' "A courageous king, because of sorrow/harm, had me, Atli's sister, dwell under an oak." Similarly, a woman is isolated in confinement *under actreō* 'under an oak-tree' at the request of her lord in 'The Wife's Lament', an obscure Old English poem.
- 20 The king's identity is unknown.
- 21 Probably magical clothes that transformed the wearers into swans, Brynhildr and her sisters most likely having been swan-maidens, a nature closely related to that of valkyrie. Removal of these garments probably enabled a man to win Brynhildr; cf. the introductory prose to *Vkv*.
- 22 The identity of the 'young prince', who may or may not be the same as the 'courageous king', is uncertain. Possibilities include Agnarr, brother of Auða (see *Hlr.* 8), and Sigurðr. This episode is otherwise unknown.
- 23 There is no equivalent to this half-stanza in *Norna-Gests þáttr*. Its shortness might indicate textual damage.
- 24 'Resounding Dales' is the home of Heimir, Brynhildr's foster-father, according to VS.
- 25 *Hildr* 'Battle' is a valkyrie-name, and the helmet she wore also suggests a valkyrie. Cf. *SnESkáld* I (41, p. 47): '*Bá vaknaði hon ok nefndisk Hildr. Hon er kolluð Brynhildr ok var valkyrja*' 'Then she woke and named herself Hildr. She is called Brynhildr and she was a valkyrie.'
- 26 For the events in this stanza, see also the prose after *Sd.* 4, which concerns a valkyrie who names herself *Sigrdrífa*, and VS 21 where she is called *Brynhildr*. The corresponding stanza in *Norna-Gests þáttr* 9 reads: '*Ek let gamlan gygjar bróður, / Hjálmgunnar, nest Heljar gángra; / gaf ek úngum sigr Auðar bróður; / þar var mér Óðinn ofgreypr fyrir*' "I let the old brother of a giantess, Hjálmgunnarr, go to Hel next; I gave victory to the young brother of Auða; then Óðinn was extremely fierce to me about that."

- 27 The nation of the Gotar, the Goths.
- 28 I.e., made.
- 29 'Helmet-Gunnarr'.
- 30 His brother is called *Agnarr* in the prose after *Sd.* 4 (and in *VS* 21), which refers to *Hauða* (or *Hǫða*) instead of *Auða*.
- 31 Óðinn.
- 32 'Warrior's Grove'. In *Sd.* (initial prose) and *VS* 20–21 the location is *Hindarfjall* 'Hind's Fell'.
- 33 Instead of *randir snurtu* 'the rims touched', the corresponding stanza in *Norna-Gests þáttr* 9 has *reynðar svæfði* 'he put experiences to sleep(?)'.
- 34 Óðinn stipulated that only a man who never knew fear would wake her. That man is Sigurðr. Cf. prose before *Sd.* 5 and *VS* 21.
- 35 The corresponding stanza in *Norna-Gests þáttr* 9 reads: '*Lét hann um sal minn sunnanverðan / háfan brenna hrottgram [v.l. hrottgarm] viðar; / þar bað hann þegar einn yfir um riða, / þann er færði mér Fofnis dýnu*' "About my hall situated in the south [or 'south-facing'] he let burn the high howling(?)-wrath/dog of the wood [i.e., fire]; there he bade one man immediately ride over [the fire], the one who brought me Fáfnir's pillow [i.e., gold]."
- 36 Or 'south-facing'.
- 37 Óðinn.
- 38 A kenning for 'fire'.
- 39 I.e., over the fire.
- 40 For another account of the events of this stanza and the next, see *Sg.* 3–4.
- 41 I.e., lord, prince — here Sigurðr.
- 42 Literally, the raised platforms along the walls of a hall, where the benches were placed.
- 43 Sigurðr.
- 44 Danes.
- 45 Instead of *í verðungu* 'in the entourage', the corresponding stanza in *Norna-Gests þáttr* 9 has *í virðingu* 'in esteem'.
- 46 Brynhildr and Sigurðr, the latter presumably disguised as Gunnarr.
- 47 The number eight, rather than nine, may suggest incompleteness, the couple's union remaining unconsummated during this period.
- 48 Sigurðr had presumably assumed Gunnarr's appearance before entering Brynhildr's chamber.
- 49 The meaning of the first half of this stanza is disputed.
- 50 Cf. *Fj.* 50.
- 51 I.e., sink into the ground.
- 52 The corresponding stanza in *Norna-Gests þáttr* 9 concludes slightly differently with the words *Sökzu nú, gýgr!* 'Sink now, giantess!' and the following prose sentence completes the episode: *Pá æpti gýgr ógrligri röddu, ok hliðar inni bjargit* 'Then the giantess screamed with a terrible voice, and she recedes inside the rock.'

Dráp Niflunga

Dráp Niflunga (*Dr.*) ‘The Slaying of the Niflungar’ is a prose passage in **R** (fol. 36v–37r), which was probably composed by the compiler of **R** or its predecessor. It serves as a bridge between the preceding poems concerning the death of Sigurðr and, most immediately, *Gðr. II*, but also those that follow, several of which involve Brynhildr’s brother, Atli. Some details mentioned in *Dr.* are not reflected in subsequent poems in **R**, however. This is another indication of the richness and variety of heroic traditions in medieval Iceland.

As *Dr.* is so short, it needs no synopsis.

Further Reading

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Dráp Niflunga

Gunnarr ok Högni tóku þá gullit alt, Fáfnis arf.

Ófriðr var þá milli Gjúkunga ok Atla. Kendi hann Gjúkungum vold um andlát Brynhildar. Þat var til sætta at þeir skyldu gipta honum Guðrúnu, ok gáfu henni óminnisveig at drekka áðr hon játti at giptask Atla. Synir Atla váru þeir Erpr ok Eitill. En Svanhildr var Sigurðar dóttir ok Guðrúnar.

Atli konungr bauð heim Gunnari ok Högna ok sendi Vinga eða Knéfrøð. Guðrún vissi vélar ok sendi með rúnum orð at þeir skyldu eigi koma, ok til jartegna sendi hon Högna hringinn Andvaranaut ok knýtti í vargshár.

Gunnarr hafði beðit Oddrúnar, systur Atla, ok gat eigi. Þá fekk hann Glaumvarar, en Högni átti Kostberu. Þeira synir váru þeir Sólarr ok Snævarr ok Gjúki.

En er Gjúkungar kómu til Atla, þá bað Guðrún sonu sína at þeir bæði Gjúkungum lífs. En þeir vildu eigi. Hjarta var skorit ór Högna, en Gunnarr settr í ormgarð. Hann sló horpu ok svæfði orмана, en naðra stakk hann til lifrar.

Þjóðrekr konungr var með Atla ok hafði þar látit flesta alla menn sína. Þjóðrekr ok Guðrún kærðu harma sín á milli. Hon sagði honum ok kvað:

The Slaying of the Niflungar

Gunnarr and Högni then took all the gold, Fáfnir's inheritance.

There was strife then between the Gjúkungar and Atli. He attributed responsibility for Brynhildr's death to the Gjúkungar. It was agreed as settlement that they should give him Guðrún in marriage, and they gave her a potion of forgetfulness to drink before she agreed to marry Atli.¹ Atli's sons were Erpr² and Eitill.³ And Svanhildr was the daughter of Sigurðr and Guðrún.

King Atli invited Gunnarr and Högni to his home and sent Vingi⁴ or Knéfrøðr⁵ [as his messenger]. Guðrún was wise to their tricks and sent word in runes that they should not come, and as a sign she sent Högni the ring Andvaranautr⁶ and tied wolf's hair around it.

Gunnarr had requested [the hand of] Oddrún, sister of Atli, and did not get it. Then he married Glaumvør,⁷ and Högni had Kostbera.⁸ Their sons were Sólarr⁹ and Snaevarr¹⁰ and Gjúki.

And when the Gjúkungar came to Atli's, then Guðrun asked her sons to plead for the life of the Gjúkungar. But they would not. The heart was cut from Högni, and Gunnarr was placed in a snake-yard.¹¹ He played a harp and put the snakes to sleep, but an adder bit him in the liver.

King Þjóðrekr¹² was with Atli and had lost almost all his men there. Þjóðrekr and Guðrún lamented their sorrows together.¹³ She spoke to him and said:¹⁴

Textual Apparatus to *Dráp Niflunga*

Dráp Niflunga] This rubricated, but faded, heading is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this reading is therefore reliant on the (partly bracketed) transcription therein

Gunnarr] The initial, apparently large letter is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this reading is therefore taken from the transcription therein

Knéfrøð] R *knefrauþr*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 See *Gðr. II* 21–24.
- 2 ‘Dark-Brown One’.
- 3 Possibly ‘Strong Little One’.
- 4 This name’s etymology is uncertain.
- 5 Or *Knefrøðr* or *Knefryðr*. The name’s second element probably means ‘wise’.
- 6 ‘Andvari’s Gift’. See *Rm. 5* pr.
- 7 ‘Noisy Merriment *Vør* [a goddess]’, ‘Noisy Merriment Lady’.
- 8 Perhaps ‘Choice She-Bear’.
- 9 ‘Sun Army’.
- 10 ‘Snow Army’.
- 11 A well-known episode (see especially VS 39). In addition to subsequent references in R, it was perhaps the subject of a lost work called *Gunnarslag* ‘Gunnarr’s Lay’ mentioned in chapter 2 of *Norna-Gests þáttr*.
- 12 ‘Nation Powerful One’. He is probably a reflex of Theodoric the Great, king of the Ostrogoths (454–526), though, in reality, Theodoric was born after Attila’s death. He is the Dietrich von Bern of German tradition.
- 13 For more on their relationship, see *Gðr. III*.
- 14 She recited *Gðr. II*, the next poem in R.

Guðrúnarkviða ǫnnur

This poem, on fol. 37r–38r of R, is called simply *Guðrúnarkviða* ‘Lay of Guðrún’ in that manuscript, but is now generally known as *Guðrúnarkviða ǫnnur* (*Gðr. II*) ‘The Second Lay of Guðrún’ to distinguish it from the collection’s other two lays of Guðrún. It is, however, sometimes also called *Guðrúnarkviða in forna* ‘The Old Lay of Guðrún’, this being a poem mentioned in the prose conclusion to *Br.*, although R’s *Gðr. II* is not thought to have been composed especially early.¹

Whether the poem is complete is uncertain.² What we have, which is wholly in *fornyrðislag*, is a reflective monologue by Guðrún, Sigurðr’s widow, which, according to *Dr.*, she speaks to King Þjóðrekr at Atli’s court. She is, by now, married to Atli, Brynhildr’s brother, but most unhappily. Sigurðr is long dead, as is Sigmundr, their son. By now, her brothers Gunnarr and Högni may also have been slain, by Atli, or at least she realizes they soon will be. In addition to the almost complete absence from *Gðr. II* of mythological references,³ several aspects of Guðrún’s reflections on her past life and intimations of the future are worth highlighting.

Most notable is the almost complete absence from the poem of references to Brynhildr; she is mentioned only once, in passing, as Atli’s sibling (27). Although Brynhildr is presumably now long dead, and Guðrún may leave much unspoken, it is nevertheless striking that Sigurðr’s widow does not blame Brynhildr for his death; instead, she attributes his murder to her brothers’ begrudging her a husband of higher status than them (3). Furthermore, Grímildr, Guðrún’s mother—who, ostensibly at least, comes across as a more sympathetic character than might have been expected of a subtle worker of magical potions⁴—is later said to have admitted either sole culpability or shared guilt with her sons, again without seeking to deflect blame toward Brynhildr (28). This distinctive feature, like others, such as Sigurðr’s apparent death in a wood

1 Additionally, chapter 9 of *Norna-Gests þáttir* refers to *Guðrúnarræða* ‘Guðrún’s Words’, which may well be another name for this poem. Chapter 2 of the same story mentions *Guðrúnarbrögð hinu fornu* ‘The Old Wiles of Guðrún’, which, if not referring to a lost work, might be yet another name for this poem, one reflecting Guðrún’s crafty interpretation of Atli’s dreams.

2 See note to *Gðr. II* 44 for the possibility that at least the poem’s conclusion is lost.

3 Guðrún says that Huginn drank Sigurðr’s blood (29). *Huginn* is elsewhere the name of one of Óðinn’s ravens, although perhaps the name just stands for ‘a raven’ here.

4 We glimpse, however, self-interest behind her actions when she describes Atli as the ‘marshal of the noblest family’ (30); she is doubtless keen to restore her family’s links to Atli, now that Brynhildr and Sigurðr are dead.

rather than in his own bed,⁵ is suggestive of the rich variety of traditions within the Völsung-Niflung cycle.

Other significant responses to Sigurðr's death recorded in *Göt. II* are those of Grani, Gunnarr and Högni.

Grani, Sigurðr's horse, gallops from the site of the murder and, in a touching scene, conveys the grim news to Guðrún by hanging his head (5). This episode is especially valuable for its rarity in expressing an emotional bond between horse, rider and, in this case, the rider's widow.⁶

Gunnarr's immediate response echoes that of Grani: a single half-line reports that he hung his head (7). His silence at this point conveys the overwhelming enormity of his guilt and loss—for which, in this case, he has no words, even if he and his brother Högni are later willing to offer their sister gold in compensation (18).

Högni, by contrast, says too much for comfort, perhaps due to frenzied grief. He directs Guðrún to Sigurðr's body, which they have left exposed to predators, and compounds her misery by describing how ravens, eagles and wolves are devouring Sigurðr's corpse. His terrible words elicit two impressive stanzas from Guðrún, in which she describes how she went alone to the wood to gather what was left of Sigurðr and to sit beside him, as if she herself were dead, on what seemed like a black night of the new moon (11–12).

Why subsequently, after extended resistance, Guðrún accepts the marriage to Atli proposed for her by Grímildr and others, is uncertain. She, along with others, appears to have drunk Grímildr's potion of forgetfulness—the list of ingredients for which is another of the poem's highlights (21–23)—but it is unclear whether it affected her, how quickly it took effect (assuming it did), what it caused her to forget, and for how long. Possibly, the drink was partly intended to dull Guðrún's memory of her disputes with her brothers and thus to make her better disposed to them. Judging from its prominent inclusion of 'the might of fate [or 'of Urðr']' (21), the potion probably also encouraged an acceptance of destiny by even the most obdurate.⁷ This, along with Grímildr's insistence, would be enough to explain Guðrún's capitulation.

In any event, Guðrún's monologue soon turns to a night when she lay beside her new husband in his hall, which from her perspective may feel more like a prison (36). The poem's final highlight is her consoling (mis)interpretation of the disturbing scenes which Atli had dreamed and which he wished her to interpret. Her explanations appear to satisfy him, but the poem's audience would appreciate the images' true import, which forbode violent death for Atli and his sons by Guðrún's hand in vengeance for his killing of her brothers.

5 Cf. the prose conclusion to *Br.*

6 Cf. the image of a horse (Grani?) hanging its head above a figure in a grave on the right side of the probably eighth-century Anglo-Saxon Franks Casket.

7 *Urðar magni* 'might of fate (or "of Urðr")' appears to be either a variation on or a mistake for *jarðar magni* 'might of earth'.

A version of *Gðr. II* is paraphrased, and three of its stanzas quoted (one only partially), in VS 34–35.

Important variant accounts of the dealings of figures corresponding to Sigurðr, Gunnarr, Högni, Atli, Brynhildr and Guðrún appear in the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, the Old Norse (Norwegian) *Piðreks saga af Bern*, and the Faroese ballad *Brynhildar tattur* ‘Brynhild’s Story’.

Synopsis

Guðrún reflects on her maidenly past and love for her brothers, which ended following her marriage to Sigurðr (1). He was, she says, far superior to them (2), and their resentment of his superiority caused them to kill him (3). Grani, Sigurðr’s horse, ran from the scene of the murder (4). Guðrún went weeping to ask for news from Grani, who was downcast (5). At length, she asked Gunnarr (6). He too hung his head, but Högni announced Sigurðr’s murder (7–8). Guðrún asked why he spoke so eagerly, and wished him dead (9). He replied, grimly, that she would be even more sorrowful then (10).

Guðrún recounts that she went to the wood to gather Sigurðr’s remains, and that night sat by them silent and motionless, as if she herself were dead (11–12). She then travelled to the hall of Hálfr, king of Denmark (13). She stayed in Denmark for seven seasons with Þóra, daughter of Hákon (14). They made tapestries depicting warriors fighting, including the ships of Sigmundr, Sigurðr’s father (15–16).

Then Grímildr, Guðrún’s mother, heard of her mood. She threw down her own tapestry, and asked her sons which of them would recompense their sister for the loss of her son and husband (17). Gunnarr and Högni said they would offer gold (18). Various other well-dressed men also visited Guðrún to offer her treasures, too, but she distrusted them (19–20).

Grímildr then brought her a drink of forgetfulness, full of potent ingredients (21–23). All those who drank it either made merry or forgot their animosities(?), and three kings came to Guðrún, before Grímildr herself addressed her (24). Grímildr offered her treasures, halls and handmaidens, and declared that she should rule as Atli’s rich wife (25–26). Guðrún flatly rejected this possibility (27). Grímildr urged her not to contemplate revenge on men (her sons and Atli?), admitted earlier culpability, and asserted that Guðrún would behave as if Sigurðr and her son were still living, if she had sons by Atli (28). Again, Guðrún said that she could not move on from Sigurðr (29). Grímildr then declared that Atli was the noblest marshal, and that Guðrún would be without a man unless she married him (30). Guðrún told her not to be so insistent and predicted that Atli would harm Gunnarr and Högni, and that she would not rest until she had killed Atli (31).

Grímildr wept in expectation of her sons' downfall (32), and offered Guðrún an escort and further lands (33). At that, Guðrún finally accepted Atli, but only due to the coercion of her kin, and prophesied misery for her and danger to her sons by Atli (34).

At once, Guðrún recalls, the marriage party set off for Atli's home (35), and the gate was opened for them (36).

She then describes how Atli woke her when she was angry (or distressed) about dead kinsmen (37). He asked her to interpret for him a dream about a distressing journey (probably to Hel) from which the Nornir awoke him, one in which Guðrún pierced him with a sword (38). She interpreted this as signifying fire, self-deception and self-indulgence, and said she would look after him, even if she loathed him (39). He then described visions of uprooted, bloody shoots and of hawks and whelps that left his hand and became food for him to eat (40–42). She interpreted these as merely visions of the sacrifice and consumption of whitings(?) (43). Guðrún may then say (the interpretation of the final stanza is uncertain) that she lay down, defiant, in the bed, and that she remembers it clearly (44).

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Guðrúnarkviða qnnur

1. 'Mær var ek meyja — móðir mik fæddi,
björt, í búri, unna ek vel broeðrum —
unz mik Gjúki gulli reifði,
gulli reifði, gaf Sigurði.
2. 'Svá var Sigurðr uf sonum Gjúka,
sem væri grønn laukr ór grasi vaxinn,
eða hjørtr hábeinn um hvøssum dýrum,
eða gull glóðraut af grá silfri.
3. 'Unz mér fyrmunðu mínir brœðr,
at ek ætta ver ɔllum fremra;
sofa þeir né máttut né of sakar doema,
áðr þeir Sigurð svelta létu.
4. 'Grani rann af þingi — gnýr var at heyra! —
en þá Sigurðr sjálfr eigi kom;
qlí váru sqöldýr sveita stokkin,
ok of vanið vási *und* vegondum.
5. 'Gekk ek grátandi við Grana rœða,
úrughlýra, jó frá ek spjalla;
hnipnaði Grani þá, drap í gras høfði;
jór þat vissi: eigendr né lifðut.
6. 'Lengi hvarfaðak, lengi hugir deildusk,
áðr ek of frægak fólkvørð at gram.
7. 'Hnipnaði Gunnarr. Sagði mér Högni
frá Sigurðar sárum dauða:
"Liggr of hoggvinn fyr handan ver,
Gothorms bani, of gefinn úlfum!"
8. "Líttu þar Sigurð á suðrvega!
Pá heyrir þú hrafna gjalla,
qrnu gjalla, æzli fegna,
varga þjóta um veri þínum!"
9. "Hví þú mér, Högni, harma slíka,
viljalaussi, vill um segja?
Þitt skyli hjarta hrafnar slíta
víð lönd yfir, en þú vitir, manna!"

The Second Lay of Guðrún

- 1.¹ I was the maiden of maidens² — my mother raised me,
bright, in a bower, I loved my brothers well —
 until Gjúki endowed me with gold,
endowed me with gold, gave me to Sigurðr.
2. ‘So was Sigurðr above the sons of Gjúki,
as if he were a green leek grown [up] from the grass,³
or a high-antlered⁴ stag over sharp[-horned]⁵ deer,⁶
 or glowing red gold above grey silver.
3. ‘Until my brothers begrudged it to me,
that I should have a man superior to all;
they could not sleep or judge lawsuits,
until they had caused Sigurðr to perish.
4. ‘Grani⁷ ran from the meeting⁸ — that was a clamour to hear! —
 but then Sigurðr himself did not come;
all the saddle-beasts⁹ were drenched with sweat,¹⁰
and they were used to hard work beneath warriors.¹¹
5. ‘Weeping, I went to converse with Grani,
with damp cheeks, I asked the horse for tidings;
Grani hung his head then, lowered his head to the grass;
 the horse knew it: his owners¹² were not living.
6. ‘Long I wavered, long were my thoughts divided,¹³
before I asked the army-guardian¹⁴ about the prince.¹⁵
7. ‘Gunnarr hung his head. Högni told me
 about Sigurðr’s sorry death:
“He lies, hacked down, on the other side of the river,¹⁶
 Gothormr’s slayer, given to wolves!¹⁷
8. ““Look for Sigurðr there on the southern-road!¹⁸
 Then you’ll hear ravens scream,
eagles scream, elated with their food,
wolves howling around your husband!”
9. ““Why, Högni, do you wish to speak
of such sorrows to me, [when I am] joyless?
 Ravens shall rip your heart [apart]
over lands of men wide[r] than you’re aware of!”

10. 'Svaraði Högni sinni einu,
trauðr góðs hugar, af trega stórum:
"Pess áttu, Guðrún, groeti at fleiri,
at hjarta mitt hrafnar slíti!"
11. 'Hvarf ek ein þaðan, andspilli frá,
á við, lesa varga leifar;
gerðiga ek hjúfra né hóndum slá,
né kveina ver sem konur aðrar,
þá er sat soltin um Sigurði.
12. 'Nótt þótti mér niðmyrkr vera,
er ek sárla satk yfir Sigurði;
úlfar þóttumk qllu betri,
ef þeir léti mik lífi týna,
eða brendi mik sem birkinn við!
13. 'Fór ek af fjalli fimm dœgr talið,
unz ek höll Hálfs, háva, þekðak.
14. 'Sat ek með Þóru sjau misseri,
dœtr Hákonar, í Danmörku;
hon mér at gamni gullbókaði
sali suðroena ok svani danska.
15. 'Hófðu vit á skriptum þat er skatar léku,
ok á hannyrðum hilmis þegna,
randir rauðar, rekka Húna,
hjørdrótt, hjálmdrótt, hilmis fylgju.
16. 'Skip Sigmundar skriðu frá landi,
gyltar grímur, grafnir stafnar;
byrðu vit á borða þat er þeir børðusk,
Sigarr ok Siggeirr, suðr á Fívi.
17. 'Þá frá Grímildr, gotnesk kona,
hvæt ek væra hyggjuð;
hon brá borða ok buri heimti,
þrágjarnliga, þess at spyrja,
hverr vildi son systur boeta,
eða ver veginn vildi gjalda.
18. 'Gerr létz Gunnarr gull at bjóða,
sakar at boeta, ok it sama Högni;
hon frétti at því, hverr fara vildi
vigg at sǫðla, vagn at beita,
hesti ríða, hauki fleygja,
qrum at skjóta af ýboga.

10. 'Högni answered one time [only],
 averse to good humour, out of great grief:
 "You will have more grieving about this, Guðrún,
 if ravens rip my heart [apart]!"'

11. 'Alone, I turned from there, from his answer,
 to the wood, to gather the wolves' leavings;¹⁹
 I did not howl or strike with my hands,
 or lament my man like other women,²⁰
 when I sat, dead,²¹ beside Sigurðr.

12. 'Night seemed to me to be new-moon dark,
 when I sat sorrowfully over Sigurðr;
wolves would have seemed to me better than all [other beings],
 if they had caused me to lose my life,²²
 or if someone had burnt me up like birchwood!²³

13. 'I travelled from the fell for five days [all] told,
 until I perceived the high hall of Hálfr.²⁴

14. 'For seven seasons²⁵ I stayed with Þóra,
 daughter of Hákon, in Danmörk,²⁶
for my amusement she embroidered in gold
 southern halls and Danish swans.

15. 'We both had in our pictures that which men play at,²⁷
 and [also] in our handiwork a ruler's thanes,
 red shields,²⁸ warriors of the Húnar,²⁹
 a sword-host, a helmet-host, a ruler's following.

16. 'Sigmundr's³⁰ ships were sliding from the land,³¹
 gilded "masks,"³² carved stems;
we both embroidered on the borders that which they fought,³³
 Sigarr and Siggeirr,³⁴ south in Fíf.³⁵

17. 'Then Grímildr,³⁶ the Gothic³⁷ woman, heard
 what frame of mind I was in,³⁸
she threw down her tapestry³⁹ and summoned her sons,
 insistently, to ask them this,
 who would recompense their sister for her son,⁴⁰
 or pay compensation for her slain husband.⁴¹

18. 'Gunnarr said he was willing to offer gold,
 to compensate for the crime, and Högni likewise;
 she⁴² asked about this, who wanted to go
 to saddle horses, harness them to a wagon,
 ride a steed, fly a hawk,
 shoot arrows from a yew-bow.⁴³

19. 'Valdarr Dönum með Jarizleifi,
 Eymóðr þriði með Jarizkári;
 inn gengu þá, jöfrum líkir,
 Langbarðs liðar, hófðu loða rauða,
 skreyttar brynjur, steypta hjálma;
 skálmum girðir, hófðu skarar jarpar.
20. 'Hverr vildi mér hnossir velja,
 hnossir velja ok hugat mæla,
 ef þeir mætti mér margra súta
 tryggðir vinna — né ek trúá gerðak!
21. 'Færði mér Grímildr full at drekka,
 svalt ok sárlíkt né ek sakar munðak;
 þat var um aukit urðar magni,
 svalkoldum sæ ok sonar dreyra.
22. 'Váru í horni hvers kyns stafir,
 ristnir ok roðnir — ráða ek né máttak —
 lyngfiskr langr lands Haddingja,
 ax óskorit, innleið dýra.
23. 'Váru þeim bjóri bol mórg saman,
 urt alls viðar ok akarn *brunninn*,
 umdöggr arins, iðrar blótnar,
 svíns lifr soðin, þvíat hon sakar deyfði.
24. 'En þá gleymðu, er getit hófðu,
 qlí jöfurs jórþjúg í sal;
 kvómu konungar fyr kné þrennir,
 áðr hon sjálfa mik sótti at málí.
25. "Gef ek þér, Guðrún, gull at þiggja,
 fjolð alls fjár, at þinn foður dauðan,
 hringa rauða, Hlögðvés sali,
 ársal allan, at jöfur fallinn,
26. "Húnskar meyjar, þær er hlaða spjoldum
 ok gøra gull fagrt, svá at þér gaman þikki;
 ein skaltu ráða auði Buðla,
 gulli gófguð ok gefin Atla!"
27. "Vilk eigi ek með veri ganga
 né Brynhildar bróður eiga!
 Samir eigi mér, við son Buðla,
 ætt at auka né una lífi!""

- 19.⁴⁴ 'Valdarr⁴⁵ from the Danir⁴⁶ with Jarizleifr,⁴⁷
Eymóðr third with Jarizkárr;⁴⁸
there went inside then, like to boars,
troops of a Langbarðr,⁴⁹ they had red loden cloaks,
magnificent mail-coats, high(?)⁵⁰ helmets;
girded with swords, they had dark-brown hair.
20. 'Each wanted to select for me treasures,
to select treasures and speak agreeably,
[to see] if they could make amends
for my many afflictions — I didn't trust them!
21. 'Grímildr fetched me a full horn to drink from,
cool and bitter,⁵¹ so I wouldn't recall disputes;⁵²
it was fortified with the might of fate,⁵³
ice-cold sea and blood of a sacrificial boar.⁵⁴
- 22.⁵⁵ 'Inside the horn were rune-staves of every sort,
carved and reddened — I couldn't read⁵⁶ them —
a long ling-fish⁵⁷ of the land of the Haddingjar,⁵⁸
an uncut ear,⁵⁹ inwards(?)⁶⁰ of beasts.
- 23.⁶¹ 'In that beer many evils were [blended] together,
root of all [kinds] of tree⁶² and burnt acorns,⁶³
surrounding-dew of the hearth,⁶⁴ sacrificed entrails,
boiled swine's liver, because it soothes disputes.
24. 'And then they made a merry noise,⁶⁵ [those] who had got it,⁶⁶
all boar's *jórbjúg*(?)⁶⁷ in the hall;
three kings came before my knee,
before she herself⁶⁸ sought to speak to me.⁶⁹
25. "I⁷⁰ give you, Guðrún, gold to accept,
an abundance of treasure of all [kinds], after your dead father,
red rings, Hlǫðvér's halls,⁷¹
all the bed-curtains, on account of the fallen boar,⁷²
26. "Hunnish maids, they who weave using tablets
and work in fair gold, so that it may seem a pleasure to you;
alone you shall rule Buðli's riches,
ennobled by gold and given⁷³ to Atli!"'
27. "'I⁷⁴ don't want to walk with a man
or to have Brynhildr's brother!⁷⁵
It's not seemly for me, with Buðli's son,⁷⁶
to enlarge my family or to enjoy life!"'

28. “Hirðaðu hólðum heiptir gjalda
 þvíat vér hófum valdit fyrri!
Svá skaltu láta, sem þeir lifi báðir,
Sigurðr ok Sigmundr, ef þú sonu fœðir!”
29. “Máka ek, Grímildr, glaumi bella
 né vígrisins vánir telja,
 síz Sigurðar sárla drukku
hrægífr, Huginn hjartblóð saman!”
30. “Pann hefi ek allra ættgofgastan
 fylki fundit, ok framarst nekkvi!
Hann skaltu eiga, unz þik aldr viðar —
verlaus vera, nema þú vilir þenna!”
31. “Hirðaðú bjóða bolvafullar,
 þrágjarnliga, þær kindir mér!
Hann mun Gunnar grandi beita
 ok ór Högsna hjarta slíta!
Munkat ek léttu áðr lífshvatan
eggleiks hvotuð aldri næmik!”
32. ‘Grátandi, Grímildr greip við orði,
 er burum sínum bolva vætti
ok mögum sínum meina stórra:
33. “Lönd gef ek enn þér, lýða sinni,
Vínbjörg, Valbjörg, ef þú vill piggja;
eigðu um aldr þat ok uni, dóttir!”
34. “Pann mun ek kjósa af konungum,
 ok þó af niðjum nauðig hafa!
Verðr eigi mér verr at ynði,
né bol brœðra at bura skjóli!”
35. ‘Senn var á hestí hverr drengr lítinn,
 en víf valnesk hafið í vagna;
vér sjau daga svalt land riðum,
 en aðra sjauunnir kníðum,
en ina þriðju sjau þurt land stigum.
36. ‘Par hliðverðir hárar borgar
grind upp luku, áðr í garð riðum.
37. ‘Vakði mik Atli, en ek vera þóttumsk
full ills hugar at frœndr dauða.

28. “Don’t think of requiting hateful deeds on the men⁷⁷
because we⁷⁸ have brought them about earlier!
You shall behave thus, as if they were both living,
Sigurðr and Sigmundr⁷⁹ if you bear sons!”
29. “I cannot, Grímildr, rush into rejoicing
or entertain hopes of a battle-ready one,⁸⁰
since, distressingly, a corpse-greedy one,⁸¹ drank Sigurðr’s
heart-blood, together with Huginn!”⁸²
30. “I’ve found the marshal of the noblest family of all,
and the most superior by far!
You shall have him, until old age fells you —
[you’ll] be manless, unless you’re willing [to marry] this one!”
31. “Don’t try [so] insistently to offer me
these accursed kinships!
He⁸³ will do Gunnarr harm
and cut the heart from Högni!
I won’t rest until I’ve robbed the energetic
inciter of edge-play⁸⁴ of life!”
32. ‘Grímildr, weeping, grappled with this speech,
as for her sons she expected evils
and for her boys major misfortunes:
33. “I give you lands as well, an escort of men,
Vínbjörg,⁸⁵ Valbjörg,⁸⁶ if you will accept them;
have them throughout your life and relish them, daughter!”
34. “I will choose that one from [among] kings,
and yet have him due to coercion from my kinsmen!
The man won’t be a source of pleasure to me,
nor will my brothers’ misfortunes be to my boys’ protection!”⁸⁷
35. ‘At once each young man was seen on a horse,
and foreign women were lifted into wagons;
for seven days we rode over cold land,
and another seven we rowed over waves,
and the third seven we trod through dry land.
36. ‘There gate-keepers of a high stronghold
opened up the gate, before we rode into the court.
37. ‘Atli woke me, and I seemed to be
full of ill temper⁸⁸ about dead kinsmen.⁸⁹

38. “Svá mik nýliga Nornir vekja” —
 vílsinnis spá vildi at ek réða —
 “Hugða ek þík, Guðrún, Gjúka dóttir,
 laeblöndnum hjør leggja mik í gognum!”
39. “Þat er fyr eldi er járn dreyma,
 fyr dul ok vil drósar reiði;
 mun ek þík við bólvi brenna ganga,
 líkna ok lækna, þótt mér leiðr sér!”
40. “Hugða ek hér í túni teina fallna,
 þá er ek vildak vaxna láta;
 rifnir með rótum, roðnir í blóði,
 bornir á bekki, beðit mik at tyggva!
41. “Hugða ek mér af hendi hauka fljúga,
 bráðalausa, bólrnanna til;
 hjortu hugða ek þeira við hunang tuggin,
 sorgmóðs sefa, sollin blóði!
42. “Hugða ek mér af hendi hvelpa losna,
 glaums andvana, gylli báðir;
 hold hugða ek þeira at hræum orðit,
 nauðigr nái nýta ek skyldak!”
43. “Þar munu seggir um sœing dœma
 ok hvítингa hófði næma;
 þeir munu feigir fára nátta,
 fyr dag litlu dróttum bergja!”
44. ‘Læga ek síðan — né ek sofa vildak,
 þrágjörn í kór — þat man ek górvu.’

38. “Thus the Nornir awoke me⁹⁰ just now”⁹¹ —
he⁹² wished that I should interpret⁹³ the prophecy of a misery-journey⁹⁴ —
 “I thought⁹⁵ that you, Guðrún, daughter of Gjúki,
 ran me through with a treachery-blended sword!”⁹⁶
39. “It denotes fire when one dreams of iron,⁹⁷
[and] a woman’s wrath [denotes] self-deception and indulgence;
 I will come and burn⁹⁸ you against evil,
look after and heal you, even if you’re loathsome to me!”
40. “I thought that shoots⁹⁹ had fallen here in the home-meadow,
 those which I wanted to let grow;
[they were] ripped up by the roots, reddened in blood,
 borne to the bench, offered to me to chew!
41. “I thought that hawks flew from my hand,
 lacking meaty morsels, to evil houses;
I thought their hearts were chewed with honey,
 with a sorrowful mind,¹⁰⁰ swollen with blood!
42. “I thought that whelps were loosed from my hand,
 bereft of joy, [and that] both bayed;
I thought their flesh had become carrion,
 I had to consume their corpses against my will!”
43. “There [it denotes that] men will discuss sacrifice
 and deprive whitings(?)¹⁰¹ of their heads;
 they will be doomed in a few nights,
to be tasted by warriors a little before day!”
- 44.¹⁰² ‘I lay down then — I didn’t want to sleep,
implacable in the sick-bed¹⁰³ — I recall it clearly.’

Textual Apparatus to *Guðrúnarkviða qnnur*

Guðrúnarkviða qnnur] The rubricated title of this poem is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; the reading *Guðrúnarkviða* is therefore reliant on the transcription therein, where it is bracketed. *Qnnur* is not in R but supplied editorially, following modern convention.

1/1 *Maer*] The first letter is large, half-inset and red, but faded, in R

3/8 *létu*] R *letop* (i.e., *létut* ‘they did not let’)

4/1 *af*] R *at* ‘to’

4/8 *und*] R *of*

5/7 *jór þat*] R *iorþ*

6/1 *hvarfaðak*] R *hvarfaf*

11/3 *lesa*] R *lesar*

12/5 *póttumk*] R *pottvz*

18/12 *af*] R *as* (with tall s)

19/4 *Jarizkári*] R *iarizscari*

21/7 *svalkoldum*] R *sva cauldrom*

21/8 *sonar*] R *sonom*

23/4 *akarn*] R *akarninn*

23/4 *brunninn*] Missing from R; supplied from VS 34

31/5 *Gunnar*] R *GvNhar*

31/9 *léttu*] R *lettia* (with e caudata); alternatively, emend *letja* ‘restrain (myself)’, ‘desist’

40/3 *vildak*] R *vildigac*

40/8 *beðit*] R *þeþit*

41/2 *fljúga*] R *fivga*

42/7 *nauðigr*] R *mwþi* / *gra*

42/7 *nái*] R *ná*

44/3 *þrágjorn*] R *þrágiarn*

Notes to the Translation

1 The speaker is Guðrún, Sigurðr’s widow, who addresses King Þjóðrekr at Atli’s court (see Dr.).

2 I.e., the most maidenly of maidens.

3 I.e., grown up and standing higher than the grass.

4 Or ‘long-legged’, the literal sense being ‘high-boned’.

- 5 Or, less literally, ‘wild (and dangerous)’.
- 6 Or ‘animals’.
- 7 Sigurðr’s horse.
- 8 I.e., of Sigurðr and his killers. Cf. the prose concluding *Br.*
- 9 Horses.
- 10 Sometimes *sveiti* ‘sweat’ denotes blood.
- 11 Or ‘killers’.
- 12 The pl. is unexpected. Perhaps it refers to Sigurðr and his son.
- 13 I.e., she was in two minds (about what to do) for a long time.
- 14 Gunnarr.
- 15 Sigurðr.
- 16 Perhaps the Rhine; otherwise, the noun *ver* means ‘sea’. There is a possible metaphorical sense, too, if the lands of the living and the dead were separated by water.
- 17 I.e., his corpse is now food for wolves.
- 18 I.e., in Germany.
- 19 Sigurðr’s remains.
- 20 Cf. *Gðr. I* 1.
- 21 Figuratively; i.e., as if dead, or close to death. Cf. *Gðr. I* 1.
- 22 I.e., if they had killed me.
- 23 Or ‘dry wood’.
- 24 Perhaps ‘Battle Wolf’ or ‘High Wolf’. He is a king of Denmark.
- 25 I.e., half-years.
- 26 Denmark. Cf. *Gðr. I* 27 pr.
- 27 I.e., they depicted men fighting.
- 28 Literally, ‘shield-rims’, a synecdoche for ‘shields’.
- 29 Literally, ‘Huns’, but see note to *Sg. 4*.
- 30 Sigurðr’s father.
- 31 Here perhaps specifically sliding down rollers into the water; otherwise, simply moving away from the shore. Guðrún continues to describe the scenes on their embroideries.
- 32 Probably figureheads.
- 33 I.e., the battles they fought.
- 34 ‘Victory Army’ and ‘Victory Spear’, probably two male relatives of Sigmundr.
- 35 Fife, Scotland. Some editors emend to *Fjóni* ‘Fünen’.
- 36 Guðrún’s mother.
- 37 Or ‘Gotlandic’.
- 38 Despite her tapestry-work, Guðrún remains deeply distressed. Scholars disagree about whether *hyggjuð* is metrically deficient as a half-line of *fornyrðislag*.
- 39 Literally, ‘border’, a synecdoche for ‘tapestry’.
- 40 I.e., Sigmundr, the son of Guðrún and Sigurðr, whom they had killed.
- 41 Sigurðr.

- 42 Grímildr.
- 43 The significance of the last two lines is unclear, unless all these activities would contribute to the assembling of the company which would visit Guðrún in Denmark; otherwise, these lines might be interpolated.
- 44 The last two lines of this stanza are quoted in variant form in VS 34, which has *stuttar brynjur* ‘short mail-coats’ instead of *skreyttar brynjur* ‘magnificent mail-coats’.
- 45 VS 34 has Valdamarr.
- 46 I.e., Danes.
- 47 Jaroslav, a Slavic name. This line lacks alliteration in the Old Norse, unless V- alliterates with a vowel sound (J).
- 48 Presumably another Slav.
- 49 Lombard.
- 50 Or perhaps ‘face-covering’.
- 51 Presumably a description of the drink inside the horn.
- 52 Or ‘crimes’, ‘offences’.
- 53 Or *Urðar* ‘of Urðr’, one of the Nornir who was associated with a spring (*Vsp.* 19–20, *Háv.* 111). Either way, this word seems to be a variation on (or a mistake for) *jarðar* ‘of earth’, which appears in the corresponding passage of VS 34 and finds parallel in *Háv.* 137, *Hdl.* 38, 43.
- 54 Cf. *Hdl.* 38. The corresponding prose passage in VS 34 reads: *Sá drykkr var blandinn með jarðar magni ok sæ ok dreyra sonar hennar* ‘That drink was mixed with earth’s power and sea and her son’s blood’. The drink is the *óminnisveig* ‘potion of forgetfulness’ mentioned in *Dr.*
- 55 VS 34 quotes this stanza with one notable variation: *lyngfiskr lagar* ‘ling-fish of the sea’, instead of R’s *lyngfiskr langr* ‘long ling-fish’.
- 56 I.e., interpret.
- 57 A ‘ling [i.e., heather] fish’ is a snake.
- 58 The interpretation of the last two lines of this stanza is uncertain, largely because it is unclear what *land Haddingja* ‘land of the Haddingjar [two legendary Viking heroes or sea-kings, probably distant reflexes of the *Hasdingi*, a Vandal tribe]’ signifies—it might be a kenning for ‘sea’ or the ‘underworld of the dead’—and whether it qualifies *lyngfiskr langr* ‘long ling-fish [i.e., snake]’ or *ax óskorit* ‘uncut ear’ (the placing of a comma after *Haddingja*, rather than after *langr*, is therefore insecure). A ‘long snake of the sea’ might be an eel or an elongated fish, or, probably less likely in the context, (a picture of) a longship; a ‘long snake of the underworld’ might be a worm. An ‘uncut ear of the sea’ might be seaweed; an ‘uncut ear of the underworld’ might be hemlock. The passage is probably deliberately mysterious.
- 59 An ear of corn.
- 60 Or ‘jaws’ or ‘throats’; the literal meaning is ‘inside ways’.
- 61 VS 34 quotes a version of this stanza.
- 62 Or ‘herb of all the wood’.
- 63 Or ‘beechnuts’.
- 64 Presumably a kenning for ‘soot’.

- 65 Alternatively, 'And then they forgot'. Either way, the drink probably caused the people in the hall to forget any animosities. VS 34 refers to *fagnaðr mikill* 'great rejoicing'.
- 66 I.e., those who had drunk Grímildr's drink.
- 67 In this passage *qll* means 'all' (nom. sg. fem. or nom./acc. pl. neut. of *allr*) and *jofurs* means 'of a boar', but *jórþjúg* (written *ior biug* in R) is obscure ('boar/horse/earth-bowing(s)?'). The passage therefore resists convincing interpretation. It may well be corrupt, especially as *qll jofurs* might be metrically short.
- 68 Grímildr.
- 69 Literally, 'sought me for speech'.
- 70 Guðrún quotes the words Grímildr had spoken to her.
- 71 Hlǫðvér was presumably a wealthy king; see the note on the occurrence of this name in the initial prose to *Vkv*.
- 72 Warrior, here Sigurðr.
- 73 I.e., given in marriage.
- 74 Guðrún quotes her earlier reply.
- 75 Atli.
- 76 Atli.
- 77 Gunnarr, Hogni and perhaps Atli.
- 78 Grímildr possibly uses the royal 'we'. Alternatively, she perhaps shares the blame with her sons (and possibly Atli) but wishes to stress that their crimes are in the past.
- 79 Presumably Sigurðr's son with Guðrún, not Sigurðr's father.
- 80 I.e., another husband.
- 81 Wolf.
- 82 One of Óðinn's ravens; alternatively, translate simply 'a raven'.
- 83 Atli.
- 84 A kenning for 'warrior' (here Atli), 'edge-play' being battle.
- 85 A place-name meaning 'Wine Cliffs', or, if rather *Vinbjörg*, 'Friend Cliffs'.
- 86 A place-name meaning 'Slain Cliffs', 'Cliffs of the Slain'.
- 87 Guðrún will kill her children by Atli in revenge for his killing of her brothers.
- 88 Or, less literally, 'distressing thoughts'.
- 89 By now, Atli has apparently had Gunnarr and Hogni killed (see *Dr.*). Guðrún may also have held Atli partly responsible for the deaths of Sigurðr and Sigmundr, her son.
- 90 Atli.
- 91 Guðrún quotes Atli.
- 92 Atli.
- 93 Or, if *vildi* is a pl. preterite subjunctive, 'they [the Nornir] wished that I [Atli] should interpret', in which case this line is spoken by Atli.
- 94 I.e., a troubling dream, probably suggestive of a journey to Hel.
- 95 I.e., dreamt.
- 96 Guðrún will, indeed, kill Atli in this way; see *Akv.* 42 [41]. For another potentially treacherous sword, Lævateinn, see *Fj.* 26.

- 97 Sword-blades were made of iron.
- 98 I.e., cauterize. Subsequently, however, Guðrún will burn down Atli's hall, with him inside it; see *Akv.* 42 [41], 43 [42].
- 99 The shoots, hawks and whelps of Atli's dream represent his sons with Guðrún, whom she will slay and feed to him; see *Akv.* 36 [35], 37 [36].
- 100 The phrase *sorgmóðs sefa* 'with a sorrowful mind' probably refers to Atli's mental state.
- 101 The interpretation of *hwítinga*, literally 'small white things', is disputed.
- 102 VS 35 attributes to Atli a short speech corresponding to this half-stanza: *'þat dreymði mik enn,' segir hann, 'at ek lægi í kør, ok væri ráðinn bani minn.'* "I dreamt further", he [Atli] says, "that I was lying in my sickbed, and my death had been plotted". The episode of Atli's dreaming then immediately ends: *Nú liðr þetta, ok er þeira samvista fálig* 'Now it ends, and their [Guðrún and Atli's] life together is cold'. In the Eddic poem the masc. gender of the adjective *þrágjarn* 'implacable, inexorable, defiant, insistent' (the manuscript reading) supports attribution to Atli. However, the poem then appears to end abruptly (some commentators suspect its ending is missing). The present edition tentatively attributes this half-stanza to Guðrún. Although this requires emendation of *þrágjarn* to fem. *þrágjorn*, the adjective seems more applicable to the ill-tempered Guðrún; it might be a trait she inherited, as her mother has twice acted *þrágjarnliga* 'insistently' (17, 31). Furthermore, the half-stanzas 37 and 44 then neatly frame Guðrún's interpretation of Atli's dreams, and the poem concludes with a satisfactorily foreboding return to the unsleeping, clear-mindedly reflective woman.
- 103 Presumably a figurative description of the couple's bed in view of Atli's troubled dreams and Guðrún's feelings and intentions toward him.

Guðrúnarkviða in þriðja

Guðrúnarkviða in þriðja (*Gðr. III*) ‘The Third Lay of Guðrún’ is a short poem in *fornyrðislag* with a brief prose introduction (**R** fol. 38r–v). Although it is probably one of the youngest poems in **R**, it serves as one of the clearest reminders of how different medieval thinking and practices could be from those of the modern world, in ways both horrifying and fascinating. For it concerns the public trial, and exoneration, by means of ordeal by boiling water, of a woman accused of adultery.

Ordeal by boiling water, first mentioned in the Frankish *Lex Salica* ‘Salic Law’ (c. 507–11), was a reality in Europe for hundreds of years and reached Norway during the time of Olaf II Haraldsson (995–1030). Essentially, a Catholic priest required the accused to immerse his or her hand(s) or arm(s) in a cauldron of seething water, so as to retrieve an object, often a stone or ring, from the vessel’s bottom. If the accused succeeded, and the flesh was found to be healing cleanly after having been bandaged for three days, he or she was deemed innocent, and vice versa. In the legendary world of *Gðr. III* and some medieval saints’ lives, the immersed flesh of the innocent emerges miraculously unscathed, requiring no bandage or delayed inspection. In the Christian Middle Ages, the guiltless undergoing this ordeal were supposedly protected by God’s judicial and healing power, but the poet of *Gðr. III* understandably says nothing about what force preserved the heathen Guðrún.

Gðr. III’s other key point of interest is its mention of Guðrún’s covert, but non-sexual, relationship with Þjóðrekr. This further contextualizes *Gðr. II*, which, according to *Dr.*, was among the words Guðrún spoke to Þjóðrekr. It also emphasizes her otherwise complete emotional isolation at Atli’s court, now that her brothers are dead. Additionally, Þjóðrekr’s role in this poem merits attention because his counterpart in German tradition is enlisted by its counterpart of Guðrún to kill her brothers in vengeance for her husband. If such a tradition lies immediately behind the fifth stanza of *Gðr. III*—the interpretation of which is unfortunately in considerable doubt—there may be tension between Guðrún’s intimacy with Þjóðrekr and her longing for her dead brothers. If it does not, and Þjóðrekr plays no part in the killing of Gunnarr and Hogni in *Gðr. III*, the poem attests to the potential for narrative innovation in Old Norse storytelling.

If Guðrún emerges well from *Gðr. III*, as a grieving, passionate and forthright woman who is innocent of adultery, Atli does not. Although he is brave enough to risk potential humiliation in public as a cuckold, he shows a lack of wisdom in giving

credence to the unsubstantiated claim of a former lover (probably spurned and now jealous), and he fails to respect his queen enough even to consider her offer of swearing her innocence on a holy stone. Instead, he immediately proceeds with trial by ordeal. And when his wife is proved innocent, he makes no statement in support of her—she declares her own exculpation before the assembled masses—and issues no apology, public or private. Instead, with nasty, internalized glee, he immediately orders a (strictly unnecessary) second ordeal for Guðrún's accuser, his former lover, whom he drowns in a swamp when she is found guilty. Here is a portrayal of an unwise, violent, promiscuous and disrespectful king.

Gðr. III appears to have had no influence on other Old Norse texts. It is neither quoted nor paraphrased in VS, which says nothing about Guðrún's ordeal.

Synopsis

Prose: Herkja, who was one of Atli's handmaidens and formerly his lover, told him that she had seen Þjóðrekr and Guðrún together. Atli was unhappy about that.

Verse: Guðrún asks Atli why he is so sad (1). He tells her of Herkja's accusation (2). She says she will swear oaths by 'the white, holy stone' that she and Þjóðrekr did not have sexual intercourse (3), but merely embraced once and had private conversations (4). She reflects that all thirty of Þjóðrekr's men are now dead, and perhaps calls despairingly for her brothers and nearest kin (5 [interpretation uncertain]).

A prince called Saxy is summoned to consecrate the cauldron for Guðrún's ordeal by boiling water (6), which takes place before seven hundred people (7). Guðrún expresses anguish at her brothers' absence (they are dead), and how she must refute the allegation herself (8).

Having picked up precious stones from the bottom of the cauldron without scalding her hands, Guðrún declares her innocence evident to all those present (9). Atli laughs and commands that Herkja undergo the ordeal next (10). Her hands are scalded by the water, whereupon she is led away to be drowned in a bog, Guðrún having been vindicated (11).

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Capitulum

Herkja hét ambótt Atla. Hon hafði verit frilla hans. Hon sagði Atla at hon hefði sét Þjóðrek ok Guðrúnu bæði saman. Atli var þá allókátr. Þá kvað Guðrún:

Guðrúnarkviða in þriðja Kviða Guðrúnar

1. 'Hvat er þér, Atli? Æ, Buðla sonr,
er þér hryggt í hug — hví hlær þú æva?
Hitt myndi œðra jörlum þikkja
at við menn mæltir ok mik sæir!'
2. 'Tregr mik þat, Guðrún, Gjúka dóttir:
mér í höllu Herkja sagði
at þit Þjóðrekr undir þaki svæfið
ok léttliga líni verðizk!'
3. 'Þér mun ek alls þess eiða vinna,
at inum hvíta helga steini,
at ek við Þjóðmars son þatki áttak,
er vorð né verr vinna knátti!'
4. 'Nema ek hálsaða herja stilli,
jofur óneisinn, einu sinni;
aðrar váru okkrar spekjur,
er vit hórmug tvau hnígum at rúnum.'
5. 'Hér kom Þjóðrekr með þrjá tøgu —
lifa þeir né einir, þriggja tegu manna!
Hrinktu mik at brœðrum ok at brynuðum,
hrinktu mik at ollum haufuðniðjum!'
6. 'Sentu at Saxa, sunnmanna gram!
Hann kann helga hver vellanda!'
7. Sjau hundruð manna í sal gengu,
áðr kvæn konungs í ketil toeki.
8. 'Kemra nú Gunnarr, kalliga ek Högna,
sékká ek síðan svása brœðr!
Sverði myndi Högni slíks harms reka,
nú verð ek sjálf fyr mik synja lýta!'

Capitulum¹

Herkja² was the name of a handmaiden of Atli. She had been his lover. She told Atli that she had seen Þjóðrekr and Guðrún together. Atli was then very unhappy. Then Guðrún said:

The Third Lay of Guðrún Lay of Guðrún

- 1.³
'What's the matter, Atli?⁴ Always, Buðli's son,
you're distressed in mind⁵ — why do you never laugh?
It would seem better to earls
that you spoke with men and looked at me!'
2.
'This grieves me, Guðrún, daughter of Gjúki:
in the hall Herkja said to me
that you and Þjóðrekr slept under [the same] thatch⁶
and lightly wrapped yourselves in bed-linen!'
3.
'I'll swear you oaths about all this,
at the white, holy stone,⁷
that I did not have [that] with Þjóðmarr's son⁸
which a woman and a man could have had!⁹
4.
'Except I did embrace the prince of armies,
the blameless boar,¹⁰ on one occasion;
our understandings¹¹ were otherwise,¹²
when, sorrowful, we two inclined to each other in private conversations.¹³
5.
'Þjóðrekr came here with thirty —
not one of them [still] lives, out of thirty men!¹⁴
Surround(?)¹⁵ me with(?) my brothers and mail-coated [men],
surround(?) me with(?) all my closest kin!¹⁶
- 6.¹⁷
'Send for Saxi,¹⁸ prince of southern men!
He knows how to consecrate the boiling cauldron!'¹⁹
7.
Seven hundred people walked into the hall,
before the king's wife²⁰ reached into the cauldron.
8.
'Gunnarr doesn't come now, I don't call for Högni,
I won't see my sweet brothers again!
Högni would avenge such affliction with a sword,
[but] now I must deny the misdemeanour myself!'²¹

9. Brá hon til botns björtum lófa,
ok hon upp um tók jarknasteina:
'Sé nú seggir — sykn em ek orðin,
heilagliga — hvé sjá hverr velli!'
10. Hló þá Atla hugr í brjósti,
er hann heilar sá hendr Guðrúnar:
'Nú skal Herkja til hvers ganga,
sú er Guðrúnu grandi vænti!'
11. Sáat maðr armlígt, hverr er þat sáat,
hvé þar á Herkju hendr sviðnuðu!
Leiddu þá mey í míyri fúla.
Svá þá Guðrún sinna harma!

9. She reached to the bottom with bright palms,
and she picked up the noble stones:
'Now men may see — I am proven innocent,
in a holy manner — how this cauldron boils!'
10. Atli's heart then laughed in his breast,
when he saw Guðrún's hands unharmed:
'Now Herkja shall go to the cauldron,
she who expected injury to Guðrún!'
11. No one [ever] saw a wretched sight who didn't see that,
how Herkja's hands were scalded there!²²
They led that maid into a foul mire.²³
Thus Guðrún received [vindication] for her harms!

Textual Apparatus to *Guðrúnarkviða in þriðja*

Capitulum] A faded red capitulum (i.e., ‘chapter’) sign in R, marking the start of a new section.

Guðrúnarkviða in þriðja] The rubricated heading to this poem is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R, but according to the transcription therein it reads *qviða G.*, i.e., *Kviða Guðrúnar* ‘Lay of Guðrún’. The poem is now, however, customarily known as *Guðrúnarkviða in þriðja* ‘The Third Lay of Guðrún’ to distinguish it from the preceding two poems about Guðrún.

1/1 *Hvat*] The first letter is rubricated and half-inset, but faded, in R

2/8 *verðizk*] R *verþit*

3/5 *þjóðmars son*] R *þioþmar*

3/7 *vorð*] R *vorþr*

4/6 *okkrar*] R *crar*

5/4 *tega*] R *tego*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 The Latin word for ‘chapter’, here marking the start of a new section.
- 2 This name is perhaps related to *hark* ‘noise’ or *herkja* ‘to drag oneself along’. It is otherwise unknown in Old Norse, except as the name of a giantess, but probably relates to *Helche*, first wife of Etzel (= Atli/Attila) in the *Nibelungenlied*.
- 3 The speaker is Guðrún, now Atli’s wife.
- 4 Literally, ‘What is it with you, Atli?’
- 5 Or ‘in heart’.
- 6 I.e., either ‘roof’ or ‘bed-covering’.
- 7 This procedure may have involved the swearer placing one foot on such a stone. White stones (potentially opaque quartz, rock-crystal, alabaster, marble or chalk) were considered sacred (cf. *Revelation 2:17*) and attributed special powers. Alfred the Great, the ninth-century Anglo-Saxon king who fought the vikings, was reportedly informed of the remarkable medicinal (and other) powers of *se hwita stan* ‘the white stone’ by Elias, patriarch of Jerusalem. Cf. also *HH. II* 31.
- 8 I.e., Þjóðrekr. His father’s name means ‘People/Great Famous One’ or ‘People/Great Horse’; he is a reflex of the historical Ostrogothic King Thiudimer (d. 474).
- 9 Alternatively, if the manuscript reading *vorðr* is interpreted as *vþrðr* ‘warden, guard’ and not emended to *vorð* ‘woman’, the sense might be ‘... that I did not have that [kind of liaison] with Þjóðmarr’s son, [something] which neither (my) guard nor (my) husband could [counter-swear]’.
- 10 Þjóðrekr.
- 11 Or perhaps ‘speeches’, ‘conversations’.
- 12 I.e., not inclined towards sex.
- 13 See *Dr.* and *Gðr. II*.

- 14 The circumstances of their deaths are obscure, but they were perhaps killed at the command of Atli.
- 15 The meaning of the otherwise unknown verb *hrinktu*, which may be corrupt, is highly uncertain. Among other suggestions is that it is a preterite meaning ‘they robbed’ or ‘you robbed’. If it is an imperative, as translated here, it is a despairing utterance as Guðrún knows her brothers are dead.
- 16 Her brothers (Gunnarr and Hogni) have probably already been killed by Atli.
- 17 This half-stanza is presumably spoken by Atli or one of his leading men. It could be combined with the next half-stanza to form a full stanza of *fornyrðislag*.
- 18 This man’s identity is uncertain. His name might identify him as a Saxon, or as the ‘(Man) with a *Sax*’ (ON *sax* ‘long knife’); alternatively, given the use of stones in the ordeal he helps prepare, perhaps he is the ‘(Man) of (the) Stone’, *saxi* being the gen. sg. of Latin *saxum* ‘stone’.
- 19 Guðrún is about to undergo ordeal by boiling water to establish whether she has been faithful to Atli. This practice was introduced to Norway from Germany in the early eleventh century.
- 20 Guðrún.
- 21 It appears that Guðrún’s brothers are dead, having been killed at the command of Atli.
- 22 This was taken to be a sign of guilt.
- 23 I.e., they drowned her in a bog, an ancient, pre-Christian way of disposing of wrong-doers in Scandinavia.

Oddrúnargrátr

Oddrúnargrátr (*Od.*) ‘Oddrún’s Lament’ is the customary modern editorial title for this poem, being taken from its last line. In **R** (fol. 38v–39v), the poem’s thirty-four stanzas of *fornyrðislag* are untitled but preceded by a short prose passage apparently headed *Frá Borgnýju ok Oddrúnu* ‘About Borgný and Oddrún’, which introduces the work’s two main characters, both human females.

Despite being of considerable interest for, among other things, introducing new characters, continuing **R**’s theme of female lamentation, and underlining the societal pressure faced by women who had, or were accused of having, extra-marital liaisons, *Od.* is one of the least known and least understood poems in the collection. Editors have long tended to change the order of some of its stanzas to produce, in their minds, a more appropriate flow, although, as the Eddic scholar Judy Quinn has since shown, these changes are unjustified.¹ In this edition, therefore, the stanzas are presented in the order in which they appear in **R**.²

The belief of many previous editors that *Od.* requires major textual surgery is understandable, however, as the poem is not easy to follow. An immediate hurdle is that although *Od.* mentions well-known figures from the Volsung-Niflung cycle, including Brynhildr, Sigurðr, Gunnarr, Hogni, Atli and Guðrún, its two main characters and their stories are unfamiliar. It is possible that Borgný, a pregnant woman who could not give birth for years, and Oddrún, the woman who came to her aid, were once the subjects of other Old Norse poems, which were known to the initial audience of *Od.*, but, if so, none has survived. Borgný appears in no other extant text. Oddrún, whose loving relationship with Gunnarr is thwarted by her brother, Atli, and their mother, Grímildr, is mentioned elsewhere only briefly, in *Sg.* 58, in a paraphrase of that stanza toward the end of *VS 32*, and in *Dr.* This unfamiliarity matters especially because of the poem’s dialogue-based, psychological sophistication, which results in the characters—participants in a complex, conflicted web of personal, familial and dynastic relationships—leaving much unsaid and often merely alluding to past events, sometimes out of chronological sequence.

¹ Students of this poem are referred especially to an important article that reveals more of the poem’s complexities and subtleties than can be explored here: J. Quinn, ‘The Endless Triangles of Eddic Tragedy: Reading *Oddrúnargrátr*’, in M. E. Ruggerini, ed., *Studi anglo-norreni in onore di John S. McKinnell* (Cagliari: CUEC, 2009), pp. 304–26.

² Bracketed stanza numbers are those of *NK* and von See *et al.*, *Kommentar*.

Of the poem's two main characters, there is less to say about Borgný. A princess who had been impregnated by a certain Vilmundr, she lay wracked by labour pains in the land of Atli, Oddrún's brother, but, for reasons unstated, could not give birth. Her predicament was acute, as no one had been able to help her. There exists the possibility that she had been cursed for having an illicit relationship with (or being raped by?) Vilmundr, with the result that she had been secretly in labour—with twins, it turns out—for most of the five years during which she had been in hiding. Understandably, therefore, Borgný says little during the poem, other than to thank Oddrún and express shock that Oddrún had not helped her out of affection, despite their prior closeness. Since Borgný is described as *fjorsjúka* 'life-sick' immediately *after* giving birth, it appears that she then sat exhausted and dying (perhaps from haemorrhage), or at least on the threshold between life and death, having just produced two children the size of normal five-year-olds,³ even as Oddrún proceeded to recount her own sorrows. Given the obscure grudge that Oddrún held for a prior upbraiding by Borgný, it appears significant that Oddrún induced her by strongly chanting only *bitra galdrar* 'bitter/sharp/incisive incantations', not healing or soothing ones.

Borgný was possibly subject to a form of magical Caesarean section. Such a practice may also have been conducted in the most significant Old Norse parallel to her condition. In the second chapter of *VS*, the wife of Rerir Sigason falls pregnant, after supernatural help from Frigg, Óðinn and a valkyrie, but cannot give birth. After six years of pregnancy, realizing she did not have long to live, Rerir's wife ordered *at hana skyldi særa til barnsins* 'that she should be wounded/conjured to the child'.⁴ This was done and she died shortly afterwards. The male child, who had presumably been removed by some type of Caesarean (unless he was simply conjured to burst out), *var mikill vexti þá er hann kom til, sem ván var at* 'was great in stature when he came forth, as was to be expected'. He was called Völsungr and he became king of Húnaland, the land where Borgný languished in *Od.*

If Borgný understandably remains a largely passive figure in *Od.*, she is nevertheless significant as an extreme, legendary reminder of the difficulty and dangers of childbirth, of medieval women's use of incantations and prayers to assist therewith,⁵ and of the disgrace associated with extra-marital pregnancy.

3 Borgný's twins seem also to have been born able to walk and therefore to have been well-developed, as might be expected of five-year-olds. Cf. Baldr's avenging brother in *Vsp.* 32–33; also Helgi Hundingsbani in *HH. I 6*.

4 There are two Old Norse verbs spelt *særa*, one meaning 'to wound' (related to *sár* 'sore', 'wound'), one meaning 'to conjure' (related to *sverja* 'to swear').

5 Although we do not learn what words Oddrún sang, for other instances, and discussion, of some of the many surviving medieval European charms, prayers and ritual procedures to aid childbirth, see, for example, E. Pettit, ed. and trans., *Anglo-Saxon Remedies, Charms, and Prayers from British Library Ms Harley 585: 'The Lacnunga'* (Lewiston, 2001), I, 106–07 (entry CLVI), 112–13 (entry CLXI), II, 301, 316–31; S. Flowers, *The Galdrabók: An Icelandic Grimoire* (York Beach, ME: S. Weiser, 1989), p. 60 (no. 3); P. M. Jones and L. Olsan, 'Performative Rituals for Conception and Childbirth in England, 900–1500', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 89 (2015), 406–33.

Oddrún had also had an illicit relationship—the two women's concealed liaisons with men are central concerns of *Od.*—but she, by contrast, is a childless, independent, active character who dominates the poem. At least to a modern audience, it comes as something of a shock to realize that, as the sister of Atli, Oddrún is also sister to the imperious Brynhildr, although her forceful characterization befits this status. Unlike her deceased sibling, Oddrún was not destined to be a valkyrie—instead, her role as emergency midwife appears akin to that of the Nornir in *Fm.* 12—but many of her attributes and actions make it is easy to imagine her as one. Her name, meaning 'Point Rune', may associate her with the spheres of warfare and rune-magic, and her serving of drinks to men and knowledge of childbirth-enabling spells would suit a valkyrie.⁶ Furthermore, like a mounted valkyrie, she rode a black steed, on which she lacked no confidence; in one of the poem's more memorable images, she rides alone into the hall in Húnaland where Borgný lies suffering, dismounting only when she reaches the further end.

In riding forth like a questing hero,⁷ Oddrún was driven by the force of a promise she had made to help everyone in need. What prompted this commitment is not revealed—atonement for some dreadful crime perhaps?—but her return to the land of the Huns, where she was presumably raised with her brother, shows courage. For whereas Atli, angered by Brynhildr's death, had rejected the Gjúkungar, Oddrún had—in another surprise for a modern audience—secretly loved (and been loved by) Gunnarr, Brynhildr's husband,⁸ in pursuit of her dying father's desire that they should marry. Oddrún's rescue mission to Húnaland, therefore, called up memories of her conflicted past. But it also added a painful new complication in that, by helping Borgný, she brought into the world two children of the man who had killed Högni, Gunnarr's brother, and who was therefore also allied with those who had killed Gunnarr himself.⁹

At the end of the poem, the grief-stricken Oddrún herself, like Guðrún in *Gðr. I*, wavers on the boundary between life and death, an empty, transitory woman (*Bil*). The poem's final words not only mark the conclusion of her lament but also the passing (*genginn*) of her sad life, lived long ago.

⁶ Cf. *Sd.* 5, 9.

⁷ Cf. Skírnir in *FSk.*, for example. Note also that, in chapter 15 of the fourteenth-century Icelandic *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, it is the eponymous male hero who travels to end the nineteen-day labour of the daughter of an elf-women cursed by being unable to give birth until a man had laid his hand upon her; *FSN*, III, 276–77; Hermann Pálsson and P. Edwards, trans., *Göngu-Hrolf's Saga* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1980), pp. 58–59.

⁸ The timing of this affair is another of the poem's uncertainties; in *Sg.* 58 the dying Brynhildr merely states that Gunnarr will want to have (i.e., marry) Oddrún.

⁹ The identities and fates of Borgný's offspring are unknown, but children born by Caesarean often prove significant figures in myth and legend; see, for example, S. Lurie, 'Caesarean Section in Ancient Greek Mythology', *Acta Medico-Historica Adriatica* 13 (2015), 209–16.

Synopsis

Prose: Borgný, daughter of King Heiðrekr, had a lover called Vilmundr. She could not give birth, until Oddrún, Atli's sister, came to her. Oddrún had been Gunnarr's lover.

Verse: The unnamed poet-speaker tells how, according to ancient tales, a maiden (probably Borgný) came to Mornaland (in the land of the Huns); no one, it was thought, could help her (1). Oddrún, however, rode there (2–3). She requested news and was asked to help with Borgný's labour pains (4). She asked who had caused Borgný's shameful suffering (5), and was told that it was Vilmundr, and that Borgný had hidden herself from her father for five years (6). Oddrún then chanted incantations (7), whereupon Borgný gave birth to a boy and a girl (8). Borgný thanked Oddrún (9), who, however, declared that she had helped only to keep a promise she had made, not out of goodwill (10).

Oddrún then sat down and began to recount her misfortunes (11 [13]).¹⁰ She recalled how she had lived happily in her father's home for only five years, until he died (12 [14]). Before he died, he had declared that Oddrún should be given in marriage to Gunnar (probably) (13 [15]), and that no nobler maiden would be born—unless fate dictated otherwise (14 [16]).

Borgný then interrupted Oddrún and expressed shock at her hostility, as they had formerly been so close (15 [11]). Oddrún replied that she remembers Borgný once having condemned a time when she had served a drink to Gunnarr (16 [12]).

Oddrún then recalled Brynhildr, who was tricked by Gunnarr and Sigurðr, and who wreaked vengeance and committed suicide as a result (17–19). Oddrún herself got to love Gunnarr, as Brynhildr should have (20), but her father had declared that Brynhildr should become a valkyrie (20 [16]).

The Gjúkungar had offered Atli generous compensation for Brynhildr's death, and yet more wealth for Oddrún's hand in marriage (21). Atli refused, but the lovers could not deny their feelings (22). Atli had refused to believe those who told him of their affair (23). Oddrún then advised against underestimating the power of love to drive people to affairs (24), and recalled how Atli had sent messengers to test her, and that they had found her with Gunnarr (25). The pair had tried to buy the messengers' silence, but the messengers had soon told Atli (26), while sparing Guðrún (now Atli's wife) knowledge of these matters (27). Oddrún then recalled how Atli had captured Gunnarr and Högni, and had had the latter's heart cut out and the former placed in a yard full of snakes (28). She had been away at the house of a certain Geirmundr when Gunnarr began to play his harp loudly in the belief that she would come to help him (29). She had arrived on the scene (30–31), but not soon enough to prevent Atli's mother killing Gunnarr in snake-like fashion (32).

Finally, Oddrún wondered how she still lived, given how much she loved Gunnarr (33), and asserted that everyone lives according to their desires (34).

10 Bracketed stanza numbers are those of NK and von See *et al.*, *Kommentar*.

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Frá Borgnýju ok Oddrúnu

Heiðrekr hét konungr. Dóttir hans hét Borgný. Vilmundr hét, sá er var friðill hennar. Hon mátti eigi fœða börn áðr til kom Oddrún, Atla systir. Hon hafði verit unnusta Gunnars, Gjúka sonar. Um þessa sögu er hér kveðit.

Oddrúnargrátr

1. 'Heyrða ek segja í sögum fornum,
hvé mær um kom til Mornalands;
engi mátti fyr jørð ofan
Heiðreks dóttur hjálpir vinna.
2. 'Pat frá Oddrún, Atla systir,
at sú mær hafði miklar sóttir;
brá hon af stalli stjórnbitluðum,
ok á svartan sǫðul of lagði.
3. 'Lét hon mar fara moldveg sléttan,
unz at hári kom høll standandi,
ok hon inn um gekk endlangan sal;
svipti hon sǫðli af svöngum jó,
ok hon þat orða alls fyrst um kvað:
4. " "Hvat er frægst á foldu,
eða hvat er hlézt Húnalands?"
"Hér liggr Borgný, of borin verkjum,
vina þín, Oddrún — vittu, ef þú hjálpir!"
5. " "Hverr hefir vísir vamms um leitat?
Hví eru Borgnýjar bráðar sóttir?"
6. " "Vilmundr heitir, vinr haukstalda;
hann varði mey varmi blæju,
fimm vetr alla, svá hon sinn foður leyndi."
7. 'Pær, hykk, mæltu þvígit fleira;
gekk mild fyr kné meyju at sitja;
ríkt gól Oddrún, ramt gól Oddrún,
bitra galdrar, at Borgnýju.
8. 'Knátti mær ok mógr moldveg sporna,
börn þau in blíðu við bana Högna;
þat nam at mæla mær fjorsjúka,
svá at hon ekki kvað orð it fyrra:

About Borgný and Oddrún

There was a king called Heiðrekr.¹ His daughter was called Borgný.² Vilmundr³ was the name of the one who was her lover. She could not give birth to children until Oddrún,⁴ Atli's sister, came to her.⁵ She⁶ had been the sweetheart of Gunnarr, Gjúki's son. About this tale it is here told.

Oddrún's Lament

1. 'T heard tell in ancient tales,
how a maiden⁸ came to Mornaland,⁹
no one on earth was able
to help the daughter of Heiðrekr.¹⁰
2. 'Oddrún, sister of Atli, heard about it,
how that maiden had great maladies;
she swiftly took from the stall a steering-bitted one,¹¹
and laid a saddle on the black one.¹²
3. 'She let the steed journey over the smooth earth-way,¹³
until she came to a hall standing high,
and she went inside along the hall's length;
she whipped the saddle off the lean steed,
and she spoke these words first of all:¹⁴
4. "'What is most worth mentioning on earth,
or what is most heard about in Húnaland?"¹⁵
"Here lies Borgný, overborne by pains,¹⁶
your friend, Oddrún — see if you can help!"¹⁷
5. "'Which prince has caused this disgrace?¹⁸
Why are Borgný's sufferings sudden?"¹⁹
6. "'He's called Vilmundr, the friend of a warrior,²⁰
he wrapped the maiden²¹ in a warm bed-covering,
for all of five winters, so that she hid it from her father."
7. 'They spoke little more than that, I think,²²
the generous one²³ went to sit at the girl's knee;
Oddrún chanted powerfully, Oddrún chanted strongly,
bitter incantations, for Borgný.²⁴
8. 'A girl and a boy were able to tread the earth-way,²⁵
those [were] the happy²⁶ children of Högni's slayer,²⁷
the life-sick²⁸ girl began to say this,
when she hadn't said a word before that:

9. “Svá hjálpi þér hollar vættir,
Frigg ok Freyja ok fleiri goð,
sem þú feldir mér fár af hóndum!”
10. “Hnékat ek af því til hjálpar þér,
at þú værir þess verð aldregi;
hét ek ok efndak, er ek hinig mælta,
at ek hvívetna hjálpa skyldak,
þá er ǫðlingar arfi skiptu.”
- 11 [13]. ‘Þá nam at setjask sorgmóð kona,
at telja ból af trega stórum:
- 12 [14]. “Var ek upp alin í jófra sal —
flestr fagnaði — at fira ráði;
unða ek aldri ok eign fóður
fimm vetr eina, svá at minn faðir lifði.
- 13 [15]. “Þat nam at mæla mál it efsta,
sjá móðr konungr, áðr hann sylti:
mik bað hann gœða gulli rauðu
ok suðr gefa syni Grímildar.
- 14 [16]. “Kvaða hann ina cœðri alna myndu
mey í heimi, nema mjøtuðr spilti.”
- 15 [11]. “Er ertu, Oddrún, ok ørvita,
er þú mér af fári flest orð of kvað!
En ek fylgðak þér á fjørgynju,
sem vit brœðrum tveim of bornar værim!”
- 16 [12]. “Man ek hvat þú mæltir enn um aptan,
þá er ek Gunnari gerðak drekku;
sliks dœmi kvaðattu síðan mundu
meyju verða, nema mér einni!
17. “Brynhildr í búri borða rakði;
hafði hon lýði ok lönd um sík;
jørð dúsaði ok upphiminn,
þá er bani Fáfnis borg um þátti.
18. “Þá var víg vegit vølsku sverði,
ok borg brotin, sú er Brynhildr átti;
vara langt af því, heldr válítit,
unz þær vélar vissi allar.

9. ““So may kindly female creatures²⁹ help you,
 Frigg and Freyja and more gods,
 as you made danger fall from my hands!”³⁰
10. ““I wasn’t inclined to help you because of this,
 that you were ever worthy³¹ of it;
I made a promise, and I kept to what I said here,³²
 that I should help everyone,
 as long as³³ noblemen distributed inheritances.”³⁴
- 11 [13].³⁵ “Then the sad-hearted woman³⁶ sat herself down,
 to recount her misfortunes, out of great misery:³⁷
- 12 [14]. ““I was brought up in a hall of boars³⁸ —
most welcomed me³⁹ — according to men’s counsel;
I enjoyed life and my father’s belongings
 for five winters only, as long as my father lived.
- 13 [15]. ““He spoke this speech at the last,⁴⁰
 that exhausted king,⁴¹ before he expired:
he ordered that I be endowed with red gold
 and given to a son of Grímildr⁴² in the south.
- 14 [16]. ““He said that no maiden would be born nobler
 in the world, unless fate should spoil [matters].”
- 15 [11]. ““You’re mad, Oddrún, and out of your mind,⁴³
since you addressed most [of those] words to me out of hostility!⁴⁴
 But I accompanied you on earth,⁴⁵
 as if we two were born of two brothers!”⁴⁶
- 16 [12]. ““I remember what you also said one evening,
 when I was getting a drink⁴⁷ ready for Gunnarr;
you said such an example wouldn’t be forthcoming thereafter
 from a maiden, except from me alone!⁴⁸
17. ““Brynhildr wove tapestry-borders⁴⁹ in her bower;
 she had people and lands about her;
 earth and sky above resounded(?),⁵⁰
 when Fáfnir’s slayer⁵¹ perceived the stronghold.
18. ““Then war was waged with a foreign sword,⁵²
and the stronghold broken [into], that which Brynhildr owned;
it wasn’t long after that — rather, a woefully little time —
 until she was aware of all those tricks.⁵³

19. “Pess lét hon harðar hefndir verða,
svá at vér qlí hófum ornar raunir;
þat mun á hólða hvert land fara,
er hon lét sveltask at Sigurði!
20. “En ek Gunnari gatk at unna,
bauga deili, sem Brynhildr skyldi;
[16.] en hann Brynhildi bað hjálm geta;
hana kvað hann óskmey verða skyldu.
21. “Buðu þeir árla bauga rauða,
ok brœðr mínum böetr ósmár;
bauð hann enn við mér bú fimmtán,
hliðfarm Grana, ef hann hafa vildi.
22. “En Atli kvazk eigi vilja
mund aldregi at megi Gjúka;
þeygi vit máttum við munum vinna,
nema ek helt hófði við hringbrota.
23. “Mæltu margir míniðjar,
kvóðusk okkr hafa orðit bæði;
en mik Atli kvað eigi myndu
lýti ráða né löst gøra.
24. “En slíks skyli synja aldri
maðr fyr annan, þar er munuð deilir!
25. “Sendi Atli áru sína
um myrkvan við míni at freista;
ok þeir kvómu, þar er þeir koma né skyldut,
þá er breiddu vit blæju eina.
26. “Buðu vit þegnum bauga rauða,
at þeir eigi til Atla segði;
en þeir óliga Atla sognu
ok hvatliga heim skunduðu.
27. “En þeir Guðrúnu górla leyndu,
þvíat hon heldr vita hálfu skyldi.
28. “Hlymr var at heyra hófgullinna,
þá er í garð riðu Gjúka arfar;
þeir ór Högnar hjarta skáru,
en í ormgarð annan lögðu.

19. “”For this, she had harsh deeds of vengeance brought about,
 of which we've all had enough experiences,⁵⁴
 [word of] it will travel to every land of men,
 that she killed herself⁵⁵ on account of Sigurðr!
20. “”But I got to cherish Gunnarr,
 dealer of arm-rings, as Brynhildr ought;
 [16.] but he⁵⁶ ordered that a helm be got for Brynhildr;
 he said that she should be a ‘wish-maiden.’⁵⁷
21. “”They⁵⁸ offered red arm-rings early,⁵⁹
 and to my brother⁶⁰ no small recompense,⁶¹
 he⁶² also offered fifteen farms for me,
 the side-burden of Grani,⁶³ if he⁶⁴ would have it.
22. “”But Atli said he would never want⁶⁵
 a bride-price⁶⁶ from Gjúki’s boys;
 not at all could we two⁶⁷ resist our desires,
 but [rather] I held⁶⁸ my head against the ring-breaker.⁶⁹
23. “”Many of my kinsmen talked,
 themselves said that we had both been [together];
 but Atli said that I would not
 countenance a crime or commit a wrong.
24. “”But one should never dispute that another
 is capable of such,⁷⁰ where love plays a part!
25. “”Atli sent his envoys
 through the murky wood⁷¹ to test me;
 and they came to where they should not have come,
 when we⁷² both spread a single bed-cover.
26. “”We both offered the thanes⁷³ red rings,
 so that they might not speak to Atli;
 but they spoke excitedly to Atli
 and hastened swiftly home.
27. “”But they concealed [matters] from Guðrún completely,
 because she should have been doubly hurt.⁷⁴
28. “”The din of golden-hoofed ones⁷⁵ was to be heard,
 when Gjúki’s heirs⁷⁶ rode into the courtyard,⁷⁷
 they⁷⁸ cut the heart from Högni,
 and laid the other⁷⁹ in a snake-yard.

29. “Var ek enn farin einu sinni
 til Geirmundar, görva drykkju;
nam horskr konungr hörpu sveigja,
þvíat hann hugði mik til hjálpar sér,
kynríkr konungr, of koma mundu.
30. “Nam ek at heyra ór Hléseyju,
hvé þar af stríðum strengir gullu;
bað ek ambáttir búnar verða —
vilda ek fylkis fjørvi bjarga!
31. “Létum fljóta far sund yfir,
unz ek alla sák Atla garða.
32. “Þá kom in arma út skævandi,
móðir Atla — hon skyli morna! —
ok Gunnari gróf til hjarta,
svá at ek máttigak mcerum bjarga!
33. “Opt undrumk þat, hví ek eptir mák,
linnengis Bil, lífi halda,
er ek ógnhvøtum unna þóttumsk,
sverða deili, sem sjálfri mér!
34. “Saztu ok hlýddir, meðan ek sagðak þér
mørg ill um skop mín ok þeira;
maðr hvern lifir at munum sínum!
Nú er um genginn grátr Oddrúnar!”

29. “‘I’d just gone that one time
 to Geirmundr,⁸⁰ to get a drink⁸¹ ready;
 the wise king⁸² began to pluck his harp,
 because the kin-powerful king thought
 I would come to help him.
30. “‘I began to hear from Hlésey,⁸³
 how the strings⁸⁴ there yelled⁸⁵ from strifes;⁸⁶
 I commanded my maidservants to get ready —
 I wanted to save the marshal’s life!
31. “‘We let the ship float over the sound,⁸⁷
 until I saw all of Atli’s courts.
32. “‘Then the wretched one came darting out,
 Atli’s mother⁸⁸ — may she moulder away! —
 and she dug into Gunnarr, to the heart,
 so that I couldn’t save the glorious one!⁸⁹
33. “‘I often wonder this — how, afterwards, *I*,
 Bil⁹⁰ of the snake-pillow,⁹¹ can hold onto life,
 when it seemed to me that I loved the terrifyingly bold one,
 the dealer of swords,⁹² as myself!
34. “‘You’ve sat and listened while I told you
 many an evil thing about my fate and theirs;
 Each person lives according to their longings!
 Now Oddrún’s lament has reached its end!’’⁹³

Textual Apparatus to *Oddrúnargrátr*

Frá Borgnýju ok Oddrúnū] This rubricated but faded heading is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; it is therefore supplied from the transcription therein

Oddrúnargrátr] This title is not in R; it is supplied editorially

Heiðrekr] The first letter is large and green, but faded, in R

1/1 *Heyrða*] The first letter is large and rubricated in R

4/3 *hlézt*] R *hlez*

10/3 *verð*] Absent from R

30/4 *gullu*] R *gullo* but corrected in the margin to *mælto* ‘they spoke’; *gullo* appears preferable, however

31/2 *sund*] R *lond* ‘grove’

33/3 *linnvengis*] R *lín vengiS*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 ‘Bright/Honourable Powerful One’; he is unknown outside this poem, but a namesake appears in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*.
- 2 ‘Stronghold New’; she is unknown outside this poem.
- 3 ‘Will Protection/Hand’; he is unknown outside this poem.
- 4 ‘(Weapon-)Point Rune’.
- 5 Oddrún is mentioned briefly in VS 32: shortly before committing suicide, Brynhildr says that Gunnarr will want to marry Oddrún, but that Atli will forbid it.
- 6 Oddrún.
- 7 The anonymous speaker of the poem, not Oddrún.
- 8 Probably Borgný.
- 9 An obscure place-name, attested only here. *Mornaland* was apparently in, or synonymous with, *Húnaland*, the land of the Huns (see Od. 4). The name’s meaning is uncertain, but given Borgný’s condition and the use of the verb *morna* ‘to moulder, waste away’ in Od. 32, ‘Land of Wasting Away’ is a possibility. Others are ‘Land of Moors’, ‘Land of Mornings’, ‘Land of Mourning’ and ‘Land of Plagues’; identification with Moravia has also been proposed. Some ambiguity might be intentional. Cf. FSk. 31.
- 10 Borgný.
- 11 A bridled horse.
- 12 I.e., the black horse. Alternatively, ‘and laid a black saddle on it’.
- 13 I.e., the ground.
- 14 Cf. Brk. 2, 3, 9, 12, Br. 5 [6].
- 15 The land of the Huns. The translation of *hlézt* as ‘most heard about’ (or ‘most famous’) appears likely, but is uncertain.
- 16 I.e., labour pains.

- 17 Literally, 'do you know if you can help?' The speaker is presumably an anonymous attendant of Borgný.
- 18 I.e., has made the unmarried Borgný pregnant. Alternatively, but less likely, *Hverr hefir — vissir? — vamms um leitat?* 'Who has — did you know? — caused this shame?'
- 19 I.e., why does Borgný have sudden pains?
- 20 Or 'of warriors'. The literal sense might be 'of a hawk-bearer/hawk-bearers'.
- 21 I.e., Borgný.
- 22 'I think' is probably the narrator's expression of confidence, not uncertainty.
- 23 Or 'gracious one' or 'helpful one', i.e., Oddrún.
- 24 Cf. *Sd.* 9.
- 25 I.e., were born to Borgný and were able to walk on the ground.
- 26 Or 'friendly', 'pleasing'.
- 27 Vilmundr. Högni was the brother of Gunnarr, Oddrún's lover.
- 28 Despite the thanks Borgný gives to Oddrún in the next stanza, this presumably means that, having at last given birth, Borgný is mortally ill or at least still in danger of losing her life.
- 29 Specifically, supernatural ones.
- 30 I.e., 'because you removed me from danger'.
- 31 The word *verð* 'worthy' is not in R, but is supplied editorially on grounds of sense and metre.
- 32 Or perhaps 'to what I said in that place'.
- 33 Literally 'then when/as'.
- 34 I.e., as long as aristocrat-governed society continued. Nothing more is known of this promise.
- 35 Bracketed stanza numbers are those of NK and von See *et al.*, *Kommentar*.
- 36 Oddrún.
- 37 Literally, 'sorrows'.
- 38 Warriors.
- 39 Or 'rejoiced (in me)'.
- 40 Or 'He spoke this, the most important speech'.
- 41 Buðli, father of Oddrún, Atli and Brynhildr.
- 42 Gunnarr or Högni, but probably specifically the former.
- 43 Cf. *Ls.* 21, 29; *HH. II* 34.
- 44 With the *fár* 'hostility' with which Oddrún spoke, compare the *fár* 'danger' from which she delivered Borgný in *Od.* 9.
- 45 Or 'on Fjörgyn', Fjörgyn being a personification of (mother) earth.
- 46 After a slight delay, Borgný responds with shock to Oddrún's assertion in *Od.* 10 that she helped her only to keep a promise, not out of good will.
- 47 Or 'drinking feast'.
- 48 It is unclear precisely what aspect of Oddrún's behaviour Borgný took exception to. Possibly Oddrún's preparation of a drink for Gunnarr was, in Borgný's eyes, indicative

of undue intimacy; perhaps, given her knowledge of incantations, Oddrún even gave him a magical potion. Whatever the exact offence, Oddrún implicitly points out Borgný's hypocrisy, given her secret affair with Vilmundr. She also turns the tables on Borgný in a very personal way by becoming an exemplary midwife, the only one who could deliver her children. Cf. *Od.* 29.

- 49 Possibly a synecdoche for whole tapestries.
- 50 Alternatively, 'stayed calm' (literally 'dozed').
- 51 Sigurðr.
- 52 Presumably by Sigurðr, against Brynhildr's stronghold.
- 53 Principally that Sigurðr and Gunnarr exchanged appearances so that Gunnarr might have her.
- 54 Brynhildr instigated the deaths of Sigurðr and his son, Sigmundr.
- 55 Literally, 'let herself die'.
- 56 Probably Oddrún's father as he lay dying (cf. *Od.* 13 [15]), rather than, as some have supposed, Gunnarr. It is interesting that Óðinn apparently did not choose this valkyrie, who would disobey him.
- 57 A maiden who carries out Óðinn's wishes, a valkyrie. Many commentators have thought that the second half of this stanza is misplaced.
- 58 Presumably Gunnarr and Högni, possibly prompted by Grímildr.
- 59 Many editors emend *árla* 'early' to *Atla* 'to Atli', but this loses the sense of urgency behind the offer of compensation.
- 60 Atli.
- 61 I.e., compensation for the deceit that led to the death of Atli's sister, Brynhildr.
- 62 Gunnarr.
- 63 I.e., gold from Fáfnir's treasure, which Sigurðr had loaded into side-packs on his horse, Grani.
- 64 Atli.
- 65 I.e., accept.
- 66 The price that the groom paid for bride.
- 67 Oddrún and Gunnarr.
- 68 I.e., leant.
- 69 Gunnarr. Lords broke apart arm-rings to distribute as wealth to their retainers; cf. *Od.* 20.
- 70 I.e., secret, illicit liaison.
- 71 Presumably the *Myrkviðr* 'Murk Wood' of other texts.
- 72 Oddrún and Gunnarr.
- 73 Atli's messengers.
- 74 Literally, 'because she should have known it by half as much (again)'. Guðrún, now Atli's wife, would presumably have been hurt to learn both of Gunnarr's love for the sister of Atli and Brynhildr and of Atli's rejection of the compensation and a link to her birth family.
- 75 Horses, presumably shod with golden shoes.
- 76 Gunnarr and Högni.

- 77 Atli had treacherously invited Gunnarr and Högni to his hall.
- 78 Atli's men, apparently led by Vilmundr, Borgny's lover.
- 79 Gunnarr.
- 80 Or 'to Geirmundr's'. Geirmundr, a man whose name means 'Spear Hand/Protection', is otherwise unknown. The visit was perhaps arranged by Atli or his mother.
- 81 Or 'drinking-feast'. Cf. *Od.* 16 [12].
- 82 Gunnarr in the snake-yard.
- 83 'Hlér's Island', *Hlér* 'Sea' being an alias of the sea-giant Ægir; now *Læsø* in the Kattegat.
- 84 I.e., harp-strings.
- 85 See the textual apparatus for the correction in R of *gullu* 'yelled' to *mæltu* 'spoke', a change not adopted in this text as it seems weaker and less appropriate to Gunnarr's plight.
- 86 I.e., in distress, a reflection of the strength of Gunnarr's plucking but also implicitly of the repeated attacks of snakes.
- 87 I.e., a narrow stretch of water.
- 88 It is unclear whether Atli's mother is also Oddrún's mother. Perhaps she is her stepmother, but Oddrún may simply be denying her blood-parent.
- 89 Atli's mother acts like a snake; cf. *Gðr.* I 27. In other versions of the story, Gunnarr dies from the bite of an adder in the snake-yard.
- 90 Oddrún identifies herself with the goddess *Bil* 'Empty Space' or '(Transitory) Moment'.
- 91 I.e., 'of gold', since dragons lie on gold. Alternatively, *línvengis* 'of the linen-pillow'. Either way, the kenning denotes 'woman'.
- 92 Gunnarr.
- 93 Literally, '... is gone/passed over'. This final line is either spoken by Oddrún and reported by the narrator or spoken by the latter in his or her own voice. The ambiguity may be deliberate; cf. *Ghv.* 21.

Atlakviða in grœnlenzka

Atlakviða in grœnlenzka (*Akv.*) ‘The Greenlandic Lay of Atli’, on fol. 39v–41r of R, is the first of two consecutive poems in this manuscript concerning the death of Atli, Old Norse legend’s reflex of the fifth-century Attila the Hun; essentially the same story is told at greater length in *Atlamál in grœnlenzku* (*Am.*).

Akv. is generally thought to be among the earliest poems in the collection and, whatever the basis of its Greenlandic connection (which might simply derive from association with *Am.*), to predate the Norse settlement of Greenland in around 985.

That the poem has more than negligible links to the European continent and the ancient Germanic past is suggested by its references to, for example, the Dnieper (5), the Rhine (17, 27), to the huge and dark forest of central Europe (3, 5, 13), to the Gjúkjungar as Burgundians (or to Gunnarr, reflex of the fifth-century Burgundian King Gundaharius, as ‘friend of the Burgundians’) (18), and perhaps even to the Burgundian capital at Worms, Germany (17). Whether the poem in its present form was composed in Iceland, Greenland or Scandinavia, it is clearly not set there. Furthermore, although *Akv.*’s narrative is largely fictional, it contains some elements that reflect history. Most generally, the Burgundians and the Huns were indeed both foes and allies. More intriguingly, some aspects of *Akv.*’s account of Atli’s death suggest a distorted, elaborated folk-memory of what may well have been historical reality, as dimly as we can perceive it from the surviving sources. Thus, a contemporary account by Priscus, related in chapter 49 of the *De origine actibusque Getarum* ‘On the origin and deeds of the Goths’ (*Getica*, c. AD 551) by the sixth-century historian Jordanes, records that Attila died after a heavy drinking session on the night of his marriage to a beautiful woman called *Ildico*, having choked on blood flowing from his nose.¹ It seems possible to detect a distorted echo of this demise in Atli’s drunken consumption of his children’s bloody hearts, which were served to him by his wife.² *Ildico* could be a diminutive of Germanic **Hildaz* ‘Battle’, which may survive as the second part of *Kriemhilt*, the name of Guðrun’s counterpart as the wife of Attila in continental Germanic tradition (*Guð-* in *Guðrún* also means ‘Battle’).

¹ T. Mommsen, *Iordanis: Romana et Getica*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi 5 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1882), pp. 123–24; C. C. Mierow, *The Gothic History of Jordanes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1915), p. 123.

² Cf. also the classical story of Tereus and Procne, well known from the sixth book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.

A further indication of *Akv.*'s relative antiquity may be its metre, which includes stanzas that mix *fornyrðislag* and *málaháttir*. This feature need not (or not always) indicate composite origin or the contributions of multiple poets. It may rather reflect the differing prosodic tradition of an earlier age.

Whatever its age, and whatever vestiges of history may survive in *Akv.*, it is undoubtedly a highly effective heroic poem, even if the surviving version suffers from textual damage in some places. In contrast to the largely reflective character of preceding poems about a static, grieving Guðrún, *Akv.* is more of an action narrative. Its tense, economically told story advances to a shockingly gruesome and dramatic climax in which the burning timbers of Atli's hall collapse around the drunken king who has unwittingly eaten his own sons. Characterization is satisfyingly bold. Guðrún again features prominently, but here impresses not just in words but also in deeds both subtle and appalling, though not wholly heartless (she lets Atli's dogs and servants escape the flames); her portrayal is enriched by suggestions of the supernatural (29?, 36). Gunnarr speaks defiantly but impresses most through his apparent refusal to fight Atli; instead, he advances coolly, and unarmed, to his death in order (we infer) to embrace its inevitability and thwart his enemy's desire for treasure. Hogni, by contrast, fights valiantly and even laughs as his heart is removed—surely the ultimate expression of the defiant, martial spirit not just of the Burgundians but of the whole Germanic North. Atli remains a sinister, shadowy figure, occasionally glimpsed but largely lurking in the background.

The poem's vivid, sometimes cryptic, language also impresses. Notable, for instance, are Gunnarr's final words to his household (11), the description of the Burgundians' thunderous gallop to their doom (13), the portrayal of Atli's towering hall (14), Guðrún's prophetic words upon her brothers' arrival (16), and Gunnarr's fatalistic reply (17).

A version of *Akv.* was among the sources for chapters 35 to 40 of VS, although none of its stanzas are quoted. The story is also told in chapter 42 of *SnEskáld*.

Strikingly different accounts of the visit of Gunnarr and Hogni to Atli's hall, and of Atli's death, appear in the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, the Old Norse (Norwegian) *Biðreks saga af Bern* and the Faroese ballad *Høgna tåttur* 'Hogni's Story'.

Synopsis

Prose: A brief introduction summarizes key events in the poem: Guðrún's avenging of her brothers, killing of her sons by Atli, and of Atli himself, and burning of Atli's court.

Verse: Atli sent a messenger, Knéfrøðr, to Gunnarr's court (1–2). Knéfrøðr invited Gunnarr and Hogni to stay with Atli (3) and promised them their choice of riches (4–5). Gunnarr asked Hogni for advice, given that they already have remarkable riches (6–7). Hogni replied with the observation that their sister, Guðrún, had, in his view, sent them a warning (8). None of his court urged Gunnarr to go (9), but he

commanded that drink flow (10), and declared that wolves would rule the treasure of the Niflungar if he did not return (11).

Gunnarr and Högni were escorted from home, and Högni's younger son wished them well (12). They rode across mountains and Myrkviðr (13), and then saw before them Atli's fortifications and armed warriors (14). Guðrún immediately noticed their arrival, told them they had been betrayed and commanded them to leave at once (15). She added that they would have done better to have come armed for battle (16). Gunnarr replied that it was too late to assemble an army (17).

Gunnarr was then taken captive (18). Högni killed eight men (19). Gunnarr then rejected an offer to buy his life—instead, he said, they must put Högni's heart in his hand (20–21). Instead, they presented him the heart of Hjalli, one of Atli's slaves (22), but Gunnarr recognized it as Hjalli's from its trembling (23). Högni then laughed as they cut out his own heart (24). This time, Gunnarr declared that he recognized the heart as Högni's (25) and that his treasure would now never be Atli's because, with Högni dead, he alone knew where it was hidden (26–27).

Wagons were brought to take Gunnarr to his death (28). Atli rode with them, and Guðrun fought back tears (29). She cursed Atli for breaking his oaths to Gunnarr (30), but the horse drawing Gunnarr's wagon continued on its way (31 [28]).³ Men placed Gunnarr in an enclosure full of snakes, where he played his harp (32 [31]). Atli rode home (33 [32]), and was greeted ambiguously by Guðrún (34 [33]). Ale was served (35 [34]), with Guðrún bringing both drink and food (36 [35]), before declaring that Atli was eating his own sons (37–38 [36–37]). At that there was loud lamentation in the hall, except for Guðrún, who wept for neither her brothers nor her sons (39 [38]). She showered the servants with rings (40 [39]). Atli had drunk himself into a stupor (41 [40]). Guðrún stabbed him in his bed before setting fire to the hall's door in revenge for her brothers, but only after freeing Atli's dogs and waking his servants (42 [41]). All those who were left inside she let burn (43 [22]).

Lastly, we learn that, henceforth, no bride will go to avenge her brothers in a mail-coat, and that Guðrún caused the death of three kings before she died (44 [33]).

Prose: A final sentence records that these events are told more fully in *Atlamál in Grænlenzku* (the next poem in R).

³ Bracketed stanza numbers are those of NK and von See *et al.*, *Kommentar*.

Further Reading

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Dauði Atla

Guðrún, Gjúka dóttir, hefndi brœðra sinna, svá sem frægt er orðit. Hon drap fyrst sonu Atla, en eptir drap hon Atla ok brendi höllina ok hirðina alla. Um þetta er sjá kviða ort.

Atlakviða in grøenlenzka

1. Atli sendi ár til Gunnars,
kunnan segg at ríða — Knéfröðr var sá heitinn;
at góðum kom hann Gjúka ok at Gunnars höllu,
bekkjum aringreyppum ok at bjóri svásum.
2. Drukku þar dróttmegir — en dyljendr þögðu —
vín í valhöllu — vreiði sásks þeir Húna;
kallaði þá Knéfröðr kaldri røddu,
seggr inn suðrceni — sat hann á bekk hám:
3. ‘Atli mik hingat sendi ríða ørindi,
mar inum mélgreypa, Myrkvið inn ókunna,
at biðja yðr, Gunnarr, at it á bekk kcemið,
með hjálum aringreyppum, at seckja heim Atla!
4. ‘Skjoldu kneguð þar velja ok skafna aska,
hjálma gullroðna ok Húna mengi,
silfrgylt sǫðulklæði, serki valrauða,
dafar, darraða, drosla mélgreypa.
5. ‘Völl létz ykkr ok mundu gefa víðrar Gnitaheiðar,
af geiri gjallanda ok af gyltum stófnum,
stórar meiðmar ok staði Danpar,
hrís þat it mæra er meðr Myrkvið kalla!’
6. Høfði vatt þá Gunnarr ok Högnar til sagði:
‘Hvat ræðr þú okkr, seggr inn øeri, allz vit slíkt heyrum?
Gull vissa ek ekki á Gnitaheiði,
þat er vit ættima annat slíkt.
7. ‘Sjau eigu vit salhús, sverða full,
hverju eru þeira hjólt ór gulli;
minn veit ek mar beztan, en mæki hvassastan,
boga bekksœma, en brynjur ór gulli,
hjálm ok skjold hvítastan, kominn ór höll Kjárs;
einn er minn betri en sé allra Húna!’

The Death of Atli

Guðrún, Gjúki's daughter, avenged her brothers, just as has become famous. She first slew the sons of Atli, and afterwards she slew Atli and burned the hall and all the court. This poem was composed about this.

The Greenlandic Lay of Atli¹

1. Atli sent an envoy to Gunnarr,
a knowledgeable man riding — he was called Knéfrøðr;²
he came to Gjúki's courts and to Gunnarr's hall,
to hearth-surrounding benches and to sweet beer.
2. Men of the warrior-host drank there — but concealers³ kept quiet —
wine in the foreign hall⁴ — they feared the wrath⁵ of the Húnar;⁶
then Knéfrøðr called out in a cold voice,
the southern man — he sat on a high bench:⁷
3. 'Atli sent me riding here on an errand,
on the bit-champing steed, [across] Myrkviðr⁸ the unknown,⁹
to ask you,¹⁰ Gunnarr, that you both¹¹ come to his benches,
with their hearth-surrounding¹² helms, to visit Atli at home!
4. 'There you can choose shields and smooth-shaven ash-spears,
gold-plated helms and a horde of Húnar,
silver-gilt saddle-cloths, foreign-red¹³ tunics,
lances, spears(?),¹⁴ bit-champing steeds.
5. 'He said he would also give you both the field of wide Gnitaheiðr,
[your choice] from yelling¹⁵ spear and from gilded stems,¹⁶
great treasures and homesteads of the Danpr,¹⁷
[and] that famous thicket¹⁸ which people call Myrkviðr!'
6. Then Gunnarr turned his head and said to Högni:
'What do you advise us both [to do], young¹⁹ man, since we hear of such?
I know of no gold on Gnitaheiðr,
[such] that we didn't own another such [amount].²⁰
7. 'We two have seven hall-houses, full of swords,
on each of them is a hilt made from gold;
I know that my steed is the best, and my sword the sharpest,
that my bows are bench-worthy, and my mail-coats are made from gold,
that my helm and shield are the shiniest, come [as they are] from Kjárr's²¹ hall;
one of mine is better than all of the Húnar's!'

8. 'Hvat hyggr þú brúði bendu, þá er hon okkr baug sendi
varinn váðum heiðingja? Hygg ek at hon vørnuð byði;
hár fann ek heiðingja ríðit í hring rauðum:
ylfskr er vegr okkarr, at ríða örindi!'
9. Niðjargi hvøttu Gunnar, né náungr annarr,
rýnendr né ráðendr, né þeir er ríkir váru;
kvaddi þá Gunnarr, sem konungr skyldi,
mærr, í mjöðranni, af móði stórum:
10. 'Rístu nú, Fjørnir, láttu á flet vaða
greppa gullskálir með gumna høndum!
11. 'Úlfr mun ráða arfi Niflunga,
gamlir gránverðir, ef Gunnars missir;
birnir blakfjallir bíta þreftönum,
gamna greystóði, ef Gunnarr né kørmat!'
12. Leiddu landrøgni lýðar óneisir,
grátendr, gunnhvata, ór garði húna;
þá kvað þat inn ceri erfivørðr Høgna:
'Heilir farið nú ok horskir, hvars ykkr hugr teygir!'
13. Fetum létu frœknir um fjöll at þyrja
marina mélgreypu, Myrkvið inn ókunna;
hristisk vell Húnmrök, þar er harðmóðgir fóru,
ráku þeir vannstyggyva vøllu algrœna.
14. Land sá þeir Atla ok liðskjálfar djúpa —
Bikka greppa standa á borg inni há —
sal um suðrbjóðum, sleginn sessmeiðum,
bundnum røndum, bleikum skjoldum —
dafar, darraða; en þar drakk Atli
vín í valhöllu; verðir sátu úti,
at varða þeim Gunnari, ef þeir hér vitja kvæmi
með geiri gjallanda at vekja gram hildi.
15. Systir fann þeira snemst at þeir í sal kvómu,
brœðr hennar báðir — bjóri var hon lítt drukkin:
'Ráðinn ertu nú, Gunnarr — hvat muntu, ríkr, vinna
við Húna harmbrögðum? Höll gakk þú ór snemma!'

- 8.²² ‘What do you think the bride²³ meant, when she sent us both an arm-ring wrapped in the clothes of a heath-dweller?²⁴ I think she offered us a warning; I found hair of the heath-dweller tied round²⁵ the red ring: wolfish is our road, if we ride on this mission!’
9. No kinsmen urged Gunnarr, nor close relative either, neither confidants nor counsellors, nor those who were powerful; then Gunnarr spoke out, as a king should, glorious, in the mead-hall, from great passion:
10. ‘Arise now, Fjornir,²⁶ let the warriors’ golden cups flow²⁷ into the hall²⁸ in the hands of men!
- 11.²⁹ ‘The wolf will rule the inheritance of the Niflungar, old grey-guardians,³⁰ if Gunnarr goes missing,³¹ black-skinned bears³² will bite with snatching³³ teeth, entertain the bitch-stud,³⁴ if Gunnarr doesn’t come [back]!³⁵
12. Blameless³⁶ people led the land-ruler,³⁷ weeping,³⁸ [they led] the battle-whetters,³⁹ from the court of cubs;⁴⁰ then the younger inheritance-warder⁴¹ of Hogni said this: ‘Go safely now and wisely, wherever your spirit draws you both!’
13. The bold ones let their bit-champing steeds gallop with their steps across mountains, [across] Myrkviðr the unknown; all Húnmrk⁴² shuddered, where the hard-spirited ones passed by, [where] they drove the stick-shy ones⁴³ [across] all-green plains.
14. They saw Atli’s land and army-shelves⁴⁴ of the depths⁴⁵ — Bikki’s⁴⁶ warriors standing on the high stronghold — a hall over⁴⁷ southern peoples, surrounded by seat-trees,⁴⁸ by bound [shield]-rims, by shining shields — [and they also saw] lances, spears(?); and there Atli drank wine in the foreign hall,⁴⁹ warders sat⁵⁰ outside, to ward off Gunnarr and his men, if they were to come hither seeking with yelling spear to waken the prince with war.⁵¹
15. Their sister⁵² noticed soonest that they came into the hall, both her brothers — she was little drunk with beer.⁵³ ‘You’re betrayed now, Gunnarr — what, mighty one, will you do against the Húnar’s harmful schemes? Get out of the hall at once!

16. 'Betr hefðir þú, bróðir, at þú í brynju færir —
sem hjálum aringreyppum — at sjá heim Atla;
sætir þú í sǫðlum sólheiða daga,
nái nauðfolva létil Nornir gráta,
Húna skjaldmeyjar hervi kanna,
en Atla sjálfan létil þú í ormgarð koma —
nú er sá ormgarðr ykkr um fólginn!'
17. 'Seinat er nú, systir, at samna Niflungum,
langt er at leita lýða sinnis til
of rosmufjöll Rínar, rekka óneissa!'
18. Fengu þeir Gunnar ok í fjötur settu,
vinir Borgunda, ok bundu fastla.
19. Sjau hjó Högni sverði hvøssu,
en inum átta hratt hann í eld heitan;
svá skal frœkn fjándum verjask;
Högni varði hendr Gunnars.
20. Frágu frœknan, ef fjør vildi,
Gotna þjóðann, gulli kaupa.
21. 'Hjarta skal mér Högna í hendi liggja,
blóðugt, ór brjósti skorit baldriða
saxi slíðrbeitu, syni þjóðans!'
22. Skáru þeir hjarta Hjalla ór brjósti,
blóðugt, ok á bjóð lögðu ok báru þat fyr Gunnar.
23. Þá kvað þat Gunnarr, gumna dröttinn:
'Hér hefi ek hjarta Hjalla ins blauða —
ólíkt hjarta Högna ins frœkna —
er mjók bifask er á bjóði liggr;
bifðisk hálfu meirr, er í brjósti lá!'
24. Hlö þá Högni, er til hjarta skáru
kvíkvan kumblasmið — kløkkva hann sízt hugði!
Blóðugt þat á bjóð lögðu ok báru fyr Gunnar.
25. Mærr kvað þat Gunnarr, geir-Niflungr:
'Hér hefi ek hjarta Högna ins frœkna —
ólíkt hjarta Hjalla ins blauða —
er lítt bifask er á bjóði liggr;
bifðisk svági mjók, þá er í brjósti lá!'

16. 'You'd have done better, brother, if you'd come in a mail-coat —
likewise in hearth-surrounding helms⁵⁴ — to see Atli's home;
if you'd sat in saddles⁵⁵ through sun-bright days,⁵⁶
to make the Normir cry over constraint-pale corpses,⁵⁷
and the Húnar's shield-maidens get to know the harrow,⁵⁸
and [if] you'd had Atli himself put in a snake-yard —
now that snake-yard is reserved for you two!'
- 17.⁵⁹ 'It's late now,⁶⁰ sister, to assemble the Niflungar,
it's a long way to look for an escort of men
from the reddish-brown(?) mountains⁶¹ of the Rín,⁶²
for blameless warriors!'
18. They seized Gunnarr and set him in fetters,
the friends of the Borgundar,⁶³ and bound him firmly.
19. Högni hewed seven with a sharp sword,
and the eighth he shoved into the hot fire;
so must a brave man defend himself against foes;
Högni defended Gunnarr's(?) hands.⁶⁴
20. They asked the brave one,⁶⁵ the king of the Gotar,⁶⁶
if he wanted to buy his life with gold.
- 21.⁶⁷ 'Högni's heart must lie in my hand,
bloody, cut from the breast of the bold rider
with a sharply biting knife, from the king's son!'
22. They cut Hjalli's⁶⁸ heart from his breast,
bloody, and laid it on a platter and brought it before Gunnarr.
23. Then Gunnarr said this, the lord of men:
'Here I have the heart of Hjalli the coward —
unlike the heart of Högni the brave —
which trembles a lot as it lies on the platter;
it trembled half as much again, when it lay in his breast!'
24. Högni laughed then, when to the heart they cut
the living wound-smith⁶⁹ — least [of all] did he think to sob!
They laid it,⁷⁰ bloody, on a platter and brought it before Gunnarr.
25. Glorious Gunnarr said this, the spear-Niflungr:
'Here I have the heart of Högni the brave —
unlike the heart of Hjalli the coward —
which trembles little as it lies on the platter;
it trembled not even this much, when it lay in his breast!'

26. ‘Svá skaltu, Atli, augum fjarri,
sem þú munt menjum verða;
er und einum mér qll um fólgin
hodd Niflunga, lifira nú Högni!
27. ‘Ey var mér týja, meðan vit tveir lifðum,
nú er mér engi, er ek einn lifik!
Rín skal ráða rógmálmi skatna,
svinn, áskunna arfi Niflunga —
í veltanda vatni lýsask valbaugur,
heldr en á höndum gull skíni Húna börnum!’
28. ‘Ýkvið ér hvélvögnum! Haptr er nú í böndum!’
29. Atli inn ríki reið glaummonum,
sleginn rógbornum — sifjungr þeira;
Guðrún sigtíva . . . ;
varnaði við tárum, vaðin í þyshöllu.
30. ‘Svá gangi þér, Atli, sem þú við Gunnar áttir
eiða opt um svarða ok ár of nefnda,
at sól inni suðrhöllu ok at Sigtýs bergi,
hölkvi hvílbeðjar ok at hringi Ullar!’
- 31 [28]. Ok meirr þaðan menvorð — bituls —
dólgrögni, dró til dauðs — skókr.
- 32 [31]. Lifanda gram lagði í garð,
þann er skriðinn var, skatna mengi,
innan ormum; en einn Gunnarr,
heiptmóðr, hörpu hendi kníði —
glumðu strengir; svá skal gulli
frœkn hringdrifi við fira halda!
- 33 [32]. Atli lét lands síns á vit
jó eyrskán aprí frá morði;
dynr var í garði, dröslum of þrungrit,
vápnsongr virða — váru af heiði komnir.
- 34 [33]. Út gekk þá Guðrún, Atla í gógn,
með gyltum kálki, at reifa gjöld rögnis:
‘Piggja knáttu, þengill, í þinni höllu,
glaðr, at Guðrúnu gnadda niflfarna!’

26. ‘Thus you, Atli, shall be as far from eyes,⁷¹
 as you will be from torcs,⁷²
 all the hoard of the Niflungar is [kept] hidden
 by me alone, now Hogni isn’t living!’
27. ‘Doubt was always with me, as long as we two lived,
 now there’s none with me, since I alone live!
 The Rín⁷³ shall rule the discord-metal of men,⁷⁴
 the swift [Rín shall rule] the Áss⁷⁵-descended
 inheritance of the Niflungar⁷⁶—
 in surging water foreign arm-rings shall gleam,
 rather than gold shine on the hands⁷⁷ of the children of the Húnar!’
- 28.⁷⁸ ‘Bring out the wheeled wagons!⁷⁹ The captive is now in bonds!’
29. Atli the mighty rode a noisy-maned one,⁸⁰
 surrounded by discord-thorns⁸¹ — [he was] their trusted relative;
 Guðrún of the victory-gods . . . ,⁸²
 she fought back tears, destitute⁸³ in the tumultuous hall.
30. ‘May it go for you, Atli, just as you had
 often sworn oaths to Gunnarr and uttered names⁸⁴ early,⁸⁵
 by the south-slanting sun⁸⁶ and by Sigtýr’s⁸⁷ rock,
 by the horse of rest-bedding⁸⁸ and by the ring of Ullr!⁸⁹
- 31 [28].⁹⁰ And on from there the bit’s shaker⁹¹
 drew the torc-guardian, the strife-ruler,⁹² to death.
- 32 [31]. A multitude of warriors laid the living prince⁹³
 in a yard,⁹⁴ the one that was crawling
 inside with snakes; but, alone, Gunnarr,
 in hateful mood, struck a harp with his hand —
 the strings resounded; so must a brave ring-strewer⁹⁵
 guard his gold against men!
- 33 [32]. Atli made the sand-treading(?) steed visit his land,⁹⁶
 [turn] back from the murder;
 there was a clamour in the court, with steeds closely packed,
 [and] weapon-song⁹⁷ of men — they had come [back] from the heath.
- 34 [33]. Out went Guðrún then, towards Atli,
 with a gilded cup, to present the ruler’s⁹⁸ due payment:⁹⁹
 ‘You may happily accept, prince, in your hall,
 from Guðrún, young mist-gone ones!’¹⁰⁰

- 35 [34]. Umðu qłskálir Atla, vínhøfgar,
 þá er í høll saman Húnar tølðusk,
 gumar gransíðir, gengu inn hvárir.
- 36 [35]. Skævaði þá in skírleita, veigar þeim at bera,
 afkár dís, jofrum, ok qłkrásir valði,
 nauðug, neffølum, en níð sagði Atla:
- 37 [36]. ‘Sona hefir þinna, sverða deilir,
 hjørtu hrædreyrug við hunang of tuggin!
 Melta knáttu, móðugr, manna valbráðir,
 eta at qłkrásum, ok í qondugi at senda!
- 38 [37]. ‘Kallaraðu síðan til knjá þinna
 Erp né Etil, qłreifa tvá!
 Séraðu síðan í seti miðju
 gulls miðlendr geira skepta,
 manar meita né mara keyra!’
- 39 [38]. Ymr varð á bekkjum, afkárr sognr virða,
 gnyr und guðvefjum — grétu born Húna,
 nema ein Guðrún, er hon æva grét
 brœðr sína berharða ok buri svása,
 unga, ófróða, þá er hon við Atla gat!
- 40 [39]. Gulli seri in gaglbjarta,
 hringum rauðum reifði hon húskarla;
 skop lét hon vaxa, en skíran málm vaða —
 æva fljóð ekki gáði fjarghúsa!
- 41 [40]. Óvarr Atli, móðan hafði hann sik drukkit,
 vápn hafði hann ekki, varnaðit hann við Guðrúnu;
 opt var sá leikr betri, þá er þau lint skyldu
 optarr um faðmask fyr qðlingum!
- 42 [41]. Hon beð broddi gaf blóð at drekka,
 hendi helfússi — ok hvelpa leysti;
 hratt fyr hallar dyrr — ok húskarla vakði —
 brandi, brúðr, heitum; þau lét hon gjold brœðra!

- 35 [34]. Atli's ale-cups rang out, wine-heavy,
when the Húnar gathered themselves together in the hall,
men with long moustaches, [when those] from
either group went inside.¹⁰¹
- 36 [35]. Then the shining-faced one, the frightful lady,¹⁰²
hastened to bring them, the boars,¹⁰³ drinks, and chose ale-dainties,¹⁰⁴
against her will, for the pale-nosed ones,¹⁰⁵ and
spoke offensive words to Atli.¹⁰⁶
- 37 [36]. 'Distributor of swords, you have your sons'
corpse-bloody hearts chewed with honey!
You're digesting, proud one, slaughter-meats¹⁰⁷ of men,
eating them as ale-dainties, and sending them to the high-seat!¹⁰⁸
- 38 [37]. 'Never again will you call to your knee
Erpr or Eitill,¹⁰⁹ the two ale-merry ones!
You won't see henceforth in the middle of the floor
the distributors of gold¹¹⁰ attaching shafts to spears,
cutting manes or spurring steeds!'
- 39 [38]. There was uproar on the benches, an awful song of men,
a din under costly clothes¹¹¹ — the children of the Húnar¹¹²
were crying,
except for Guðrún alone, as she never cried
for her bear-hard brothers and sweet boys,
the young, unwise¹¹³ ones whom she bore to Atli!
- 40 [39]. The gosling-bright one¹¹⁴ sowed¹¹⁵ gold,
with red rings she showered the house-servants;
she let fate grow, and shining metal flow —
the woman paid no heed at all to god-houses!¹¹⁶
- 41 [40]. Atli [was] unaware — he'd drunk himself to exhaustion —¹¹⁷
he had no weapon,¹¹⁸ he wasn't on his guard against Guðrún;
often that sport was better, when they would gently
[and] more often embrace each other before noblemen!
- 42 [41]. With a sword-point she¹¹⁹ gave the bed blood to drink,¹²⁰
with a Hel-eager hand — and let the whelps loose;
the bride shoved before the hall's door — and
wakened the house-servants¹²¹ —
a hot firebrand; those [acts] she let [serve as]
retribution for her brothers!¹²²

- 43 [42]. Eldi gaf hon þá alla er inni váru
ok frá morði þeira Gunnars komnir váru ór Myrkheimi;
 forn timbr fellu, fjarghús ruku,
 beer Buðlunga, brunnu ok skjaldmeyjar
 inni, aldrstamar, hnigu í eld heitan.
- 44 [43]. Fullrøtt er um þetta; ferr engi svá síðan
 brúðr í brynu brœðra at hefna;
 hon hefir þriggja þjóðkonunga
 banorð borit, björt, áðr sylti.

En segir glöggra i 'Atlamálum inum grænlenzkum.'

43 [42].

She gave to the fire all those who were inside
and had come from the murder of Gunnarr and his men(?),
from Myrkheimr;¹²³
ancient timbers fell, god-houses¹²⁴ smoked,
the farmstead of the Buðlungar,¹²⁵ [and] shield-maidens
also burned
inside, life-stemmed,¹²⁶ they sank in the hot fire.

44 [43].

About this [the tale] is fully told; henceforth no bride will go
thus in a mail-coat to avenge her brothers;¹²⁷
of three people-kings,¹²⁸ she, bright one, has brought
the death-word,¹²⁹ before she died.

And it is told¹³⁰ in more detail in *Atlamál in grænlenzku* ['The Greenlandic Poem of Atli'].

Textual Apparatus to *Atlakviða in Grænlenzka*

Dauði Atla] This rubricated heading is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this reading is therefore reliant on the transcription therein

Guðrún] The first letter is large and inset but illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; it is therefore taken from the transcription therein

Atlakviða in grænlenzka] This rubricated heading is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this reading is therefore reliant on the (partly bracketed) transcription therein

1/1 *Atli*] The first letter is large, half-inset and rubricated, but faded, in R

2/4 *vreiði*] R *reiði*

4/7 *darraða*] R *daRaþr*

8/7 *ylfskr*] R *ylfstr*

11/3 *gamlir*] R *gamlar*

13/1 *létu*] R *letom*

14/9 *dafar, darraða*] R *dafa daRaþr*

16/7 *nái*] R *nár*

19/8 *Gunnars*] R *gvnars*

26/3 *þú*] R absent; supplied to fill out the metre

26/5 *und*] R *vnt*

29/5] Although there is no indication of omission in R, some text has evidently been lost either here or earlier in this line

30/7 *hölkvi*] R *hvlqvi*

31/4 *dauðs*] R *dauþ*

37/6 *valbráðir*] R *valbrvðir*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 The identification of this poem as Greenlandic is usually considered to postdate the poem's composition and to be modelled on the title of the following poem, *Atlamál in grænlenzku*.
- 2 In VS, the corresponding figure is called Vingi.
- 3 Literally, 'concealing (ones)'; i.e., people concealing their thoughts.
- 4 Or 'hall of the slain', but whether there is an allusion to Óðinn's Valhöll is uncertain; cf. st. 14.
- 5 For this line to alliterate, it requires an East Norse or preliterary West Norse form of *reiðr* (*reiði*), namely **vreiðr* (*vreiði*).
- 6 Huns. Notably, *Akv.* appears to use the term *Hún(-)* 'Hun' to describe only Attila, his people and his land; cf. note to *Sg.* 4.
- 7 A position of honour.
- 8 'Murk Wood'.
- 9 I.e., uncharted, untracked.

- 10 I.e., 'you and Högri'; *yðr* should perhaps be emended to *yk(k)r* 'you two'.
- 11 Gunnarr and Högri.
- 12 This phrase, which also appears in st. 16, has sometimes been deemed problematical. But perhaps helmets were arranged around the hearth when not being worn, or we may imagine helmeted men sitting around a fire.
- 13 Or 'slaughter-red', i.e., blood-red.
- 14 Or perhaps 'pennons'.
- 15 The notion of the 'yelling' spear, also found in Old English poetry, presumably relates to a sound produced as the weapon flew through the air.
- 16 Prows.
- 17 The Dnieper.
- 18 An understatement for 'forest'.
- 19 Literally, 'younger'.
- 20 The attribution of the second half of this stanza, and all of the next, to Gunnarr, rather than Högri, is insecure but supported by the paraphrase in VS 35.
- 21 Probably, in origin, Latin *Caesar*, a title applied to the emperors of Rome and Constantinople.
- 22 The attribution of this entire stanza to Högri is insecure but supported by the paraphrase in VS 35.
- 23 Guðrún.
- 24 I.e., in wolf-hair.
- 25 Literally, 'in'.
- 26 One of Gunnarr's servants. He performs the same function of cupbearer in VS 37.
- 27 Literally, 'wade'.
- 28 Literally, the platform running along the walls, where the benches were situated.
- 29 This stanza, or a variant thereof, is presumably the basis for the following words spoken by Gunnarr in VS 37: 'nú mun inn gamli úlfrinn komask at gullinu ef vér deyjum, ok svá björninn mun eigi spara at bíta sínum vígtónum' "now will the old wolf get at the gold, if we die, and thus the bear will not spare to bite with its canine teeth".
- 30 Wolf-packs.
- 31 I.e., 'is killed'. Gunnarr, who refers to himself in the third person, is perhaps indicating that, if he dies at the hands of Atli and his men, he will take the location of his gold with him to the grave, so that only the wolves of the wilderness may have it.
- 32 Brown bears are sometimes almost black.
- 33 Or 'wrangling'.
- 34 Gunnarr imputes a bestial cowardice and effeminacy to his foes.
- 35 In the second half of this stanza, Gunnarr possibly imagines himself and Högri as bears cornered by dogs, and that the pair of them will give the dogs a good fight before succumbing. If so, 'bitch-stud' is probably a sexually derogatory term for Atli's men.
- 36 In contrast to the treachery that Gunnarr and Högri will face, but probably also 'valiant' because free from the shame of cowardice.
- 37 Gunnarr.
- 38 This refers to the people, not Gunnarr.
- 39 Warriors, here Gunnarr and Högri.

- 40 I.e., their young children; cf. *Vkv.* 24. Alternatively, *Húna* ‘of the Húnar’, though the sense is then somewhat problematic; cf. note to *Sg.* 4.
- 41 Heir.
- 42 ‘Hun-Mark’.
- 43 Horses, creatures shy of the riding stick.
- 44 Possibly ramparts, turrets or battlements.
- 45 Perhaps deep ditches immediately outside the stronghold. Alternatively, perhaps emend *djúpa* to *djúpar* and translate ‘deep (army-shelves)’, or to *Dúnár* ‘(army-shelves) of the Danube’.
- 46 Elsewhere, *Bikki* ‘Bitch’ or ‘(Son of) a Bitch’ is the name of a wicked counsellor of Jormunrekk. Perhaps *Bikka* ‘Bikki’s’ is a mistake for *Buðla* ‘Buðli’s’.
- 47 Or, less likely, ‘around’, ‘enclosing’.
- 48 Benches outside the hall.
- 49 Perhaps also ‘hall of the slain’, given the events that unfold; cf. st. 2.
- 50 I.e., were positioned—they need not have been sitting.
- 51 I.e., to wage war on Atli. With Atli’s impressive stronghold, compare that of Iarmericus (ON *Jormunrekk*) in *GD* 8.10.7, 8.10.13.
- 52 Guðrún.
- 53 I.e., she was sober, having not participated in merry-making.
- 54 Either an allusion to the helmets of Gunnarr and his men or a poetic pl. that may be translated as sg. Cf. *Akv.* 3.
- 55 Alternatively, a poetic pl. that can be translated as sg.
- 56 I.e., Gunnarr (and his men) should have fought on horseback throughout the day.
- 57 The ‘constraint’ is death.
- 58 I.e., as slaves.
- 59 The speaker of this stanza is presumably Gunnarr.
- 60 I.e., too late now.
- 61 Alternatively, *rosmufjoll* might derive from *Wormazfeld* ‘plains of Worms’ and mean ‘hills/mountains of Worms’. Formerly the capital of the kingdom of the Burgundians, Worms is on the west bank of the Rhine.
- 62 The Rhine.
- 63 Burgundians, of whom Gunnarr is the leader. By calling the Húnar ‘friends of the Burgundians’ at the very moment of betrayal, the poet may use irony to emphasize their treachery. Alternatively, emend nom. pl. *vinir* ‘friends’ to acc. sg. *vin* ‘friend’, the ‘friend of the Burgundians’ then being Gunnarr.
- 64 I.e., ‘Högni defended Gunnarr’, but *Gunnars* should perhaps be emended *sínar*, to yield the sense ‘Högni defended his (own) hands (i.e., himself)’.
- 65 Gunnarr.
- 66 Goths, or humans in general.
- 67 Gunnarr replies.
- 68 One of Atli’s slaves. His name might mean ‘Noisy One’ (he screams in VS) or ‘One of the Wooden Shelf’.
- 69 Or ‘grave-smith’. Either way, this term for ‘warrior’ (here Högni) is used somewhat ironically in the context.

- 70 Högni's heart.
- 71 I.e., the eyes of people. This is presumably a prophecy of Atli's death.
- 72 A synecdoche for all the treasure of the Niflungar.
- 73 The Rhine, where Gunnarr has sunk his treasure. Cf. *Sg.* 16.
- 74 I.e., the treasure over which men quarrel.
- 75 I.e., (heathen) god.
- 76 Alternatively, '... the inheritance of the Niflungar of Áss/divine-descent'.
- 77 Or 'arms'.
- 78 This stanza may be spoken by Atli or one of his men.
- 79 Perhaps more than one wagon was required to transport not just Gunnarr, but also the bodies of Hjalli and Högni. Alternatively, this might be a poetic pl. that can be translated as sg.
- 80 A (proper noun for a?) horse whose mane perhaps had attachments which made a noise as they moved.
- 81 Probably Atli's companions or their swords.
- 82 Although there is no indication in the manuscript, some text has evidently been lost either here or earlier in this line.
- 83 Presumably of joy or hope.
- 84 Presumably holy names invoked to secure oaths.
- 85 I.e., long ago.
- 86 Probably the morning sun.
- 87 'Victory God', an alias of Óðinn.
- 88 What this kenning denotes is unclear. Perhaps the 'rest-bed(ding)' is the earth of the grave, in which case its horse might be Sleipnir, Óðinn's steed, on which dead warriors may have been thought to ride to the afterlife in Valhöll. A more mundane possibility, however, is that it denotes a wooden bedstead, perhaps one with carved horse-heads on its posts.
- 89 'Glorious One', a god, possibly a manifestation of the glorious aspect of Óðinn. Cf. *Háv.* 110.
- 90 Brackets enclose the stanza numbers of NK, which makes these lines the second part of st. 28.
- 91 Horse.
- 92 Gunnarr.
- 93 Gunnarr.
- 94 I.e., an enclosure.
- 95 I.e., lord, one who dispenses wealth (rings). The term appears ironic in this context.
- 96 The first half-line appears metrically short in the Old Norse.
- 97 The ringing of metal weapons.
- 98 Either Atli's or Gunnarr's. *Rognir* is also an alias of Óðinn.
- 99 Or 'reward' or 'compensation'.
- 100 Supposedly young animals which have been killed and can now be eaten, their spirits having gone to *Niflhel* 'Dark/Mist Hel'. But a much darker significance to Guðrún's words will soon become apparent with regard to Guðrun's children, who were possibly *Niflungar*.

- 101 The identity of the two groups is unclear, but one might comprise the men who have just returned from putting Gunnarr in the snake-yard, and the other those who had stayed behind at court. Alternatively, emend *hvárir* to *hvatir* and translate ‘keen/bold ones went inside’.
- 102 This description may identify Guðrún with one of the sinister supernatural *dísir* ‘ladies’ who attended conflicts and controlled men’s fates. The first line of this stanza lacks alliteration; perhaps *veigar* ‘drinks’ is a mistaken substitution for *skálar* ‘bowls’, ‘cups’.
- 103 Warriors, men.
- 104 Tidbits for the men to eat with their ale.
- 105 This description may suggest both drunkenness and imminent death; cf. *Akv.* 2.
- 106 Or ‘told Atli of his shame’. *Nið* represents an extremely potent accusation in Old Norse literature. There is perhaps a pun on *niðr* ‘kinsman’.
- 107 Pieces of slaughtered meat.
- 108 The privileged position at the centre of the bench opposite Atli.
- 109 Atli’s sons.
- 110 Erpr and Eitill.
- 111 The distraught Huns perhaps cover their heads with their cloaks.
- 112 I.e., all the Huns, not literally just their children.
- 113 I.e., inexperienced.
- 114 I.e., white as a gosling; here a description of Guðrún. The term suggests a radiant exultancy.
- 115 I.e., strewed, distributed.
- 116 I.e., she did not hold back in distributing treasures from temples dedicated to the (living) gods.
- 117 Literally, ‘had drunk himself weary’. This line lacks alliteration, which probably indicates textual corruption.
- 118 Or ‘weapons’.
- 119 Guðrún.
- 120 An ironic phrase — Guðrún is still serving drinks.
- 121 Presumably so that they might escape.
- 122 This line’s second half shows unusual alliteration; perhaps emend to *gjold broeðra* to *braeðra gjold*, which yields the same sense.
- 123 ‘Murk Home/World’, a unique mythological-sounding name suggestive of the darkness of Myrkviðr and Hel.
- 124 Temples.
- 125 ‘Descendants of Buðli’.
- 126 I.e., having their lives cut short.
- 127 Guðrún is not actually described as wearing a mail-coat in *Akv.*
- 128 One of these kings is obviously Atli, but the identity of the others is unclear.
- 129 I.e., she brought about their deaths.
- 130 I.e., this tale is told.

Atlamál in grænlenzku

Atlamál in grænlenzku (*Am.*) ‘The Greenlandic Poem/Sayings of Atli’ tells essentially the same story as *Akv.*, but in more leisurely fashion, in more modern idiom, at much greater length, and with many differences of detail and focus. Although *Am.* is generally held to suffer from comparison with *Akv.*, and its presence in **R** (fol. 41r–44r) may frustrate an audience keen not for recapitulation but progression to the end of the story of Guðrún’s offspring, we should be grateful to the compiler who preserved it in writing, as it has considerable merit.

Am. is an ambitious poem. Its composer has not only created the second-longest poem in **R**—the longest of which, *Háv.*, is clearly a composite work—but undertaken a thorough modernization of a well-known traditional narrative. Although still set in the past and known worldwide, the events he (or she) recounts are not said to have happened long ago, and, in contrast to *Akv.*, his characters are no longer Burgundians and Huns who come to grief over a famed treasure destined to glitter in the depths of the Rhine. Instead, he transplants the continental dealings of ancient royal houses to a setting suggestive of the great farmsteads and farmers of Icelandic prose sagas of the thirteenth century. His tale is one of domestic, not dynastic, intrigue and strife. Accordingly, its language tends toward the prosaic, colloquial and everyday, rather than the elevated. In similar vein, there is almost no mythological aspect; gods and other supernatural beings neither play a direct part nor hover on the side-lines nor lurk in the background as they do in many other heroic poems, although there is a strong sense of fate. The only suggestions of the mythological come in dreams, which feature quite prominently, as in many Icelandic prose sagas. They culminate in Glaumvor’s creepy vision of dead spirit-women visiting her husband, Gunnarr. Notably, no Óðinnic magic surrounds the runic warning sent by Guðrún to her brothers (it is the counterpart of the wolf’s hair in *Akv.*); its interest lies solely in the literal message it conveys, the malicious alteration thereof, and the atmospherically nocturnal and firelit effort by Kostbera, Högni’s wife, to decipher its true meaning.

In terms of narrative and characterization, *Am.* is most significant for the prominence it gives to the fight between Atli’s men and the Gjúkungar, even if the numbers involved are rather few, and to Guðrún’s martial role there and in earlier years. During that fight we see Guðrún—who, we later learn, had gone raiding in her youth with her brothers and Sigurðr—in a vigorously active light, throwing off her cloak, seizing a sword and felling two of Atli’s men, including his brother. Yet, as

well as she performs the ‘masculine’ role of warrior, she is also adept at intrigue and at voicing an almost proto-feminist view about the gender-based division of power in society: ‘Men’s overbearing might strikes down women’s choices!’, she declares.

Guðrún’s severing of Atli’s brother’s leg exemplifies another characteristic of the *Am.* poet, namely his taste for bloody and grotesque detail. This is also apparent, for instance, in Kostbera’s unnerving dream of a lumbering polar bear, in Glaumvør’s macabre vision of a spear with howling wolves at either end, in Gunnarr’s playing of the harp with his toes while hanging from a gallows crawling with snakes, in Guðrún’s slitting of her sons’ throats on the edge of a bench, in Atli’s drinking of their blood, and in the deliciously horrible image of Atli ‘trusting in his molars’ as he munches on their flesh. The poem abounds with striking details.

It is not all excess and conflict, however. One striking feature of *Am.* is also its most subdued. Unlike in *Akv.*, Guðrún does not burn Atli within his hall. Instead of this dramatic climax, we hear that, after stabbing him with the help of Högni’s son, she buried him respectfully, as he wished. The precise form of burial—in a coffin within a ship—may be the poet’s antiquarian invention, but it is nonetheless memorable.

Ultimately, though, *Am.* is most notable for two fundamental things. First is its sustained use of *málaháttir*. Second, despite some indications of a Danish background, is its apparent status as an instance of Greenlandic literature.

A version of *Am.* was among the sources of chapters 35 to 40 of VS. The story is also told in chapter 42 of *SnESkáld*.

Strikingly different accounts of the visit of Gunnarr and Högni to Atli’s hall, and of Atli’s death, appear in the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, the Old Norse (Norwegian) *Piðreks saga af Bern* and the Faroese ballad *Høgna tåttur* ‘Högni’s Story’.

Synopsis

The poet announces the widespread knowledge of private talks held by men, which led to the betrayal of the sons of Gjúki (1), but which also harmed Atli, who invited his brothers-in-law, Gunnarr and Högni, to visit him (2). Guðrún, Atli’s wife, found out about their plan, but could not go to meet her brothers herself (3). Instead, she sent them a runic warning, which Atli’s messenger, Vingi, distorted, before he arrived at Gjúki’s home and delivered the message (4).

The hosts were cheerful and expected no trickery (5). Kostbera, Högni’s wife, and Glaumvør, Gunnarr’s wife, greeted Atli’s messengers (6). The visitors invited Högni to visit their lord at his home, but Högni thought Gunnarr’s enthusiasm ill-advised (7).

Mead was drunk (8), Högni and Kostbera made their bed, and she tried to interpret the confused runes of Guðrún’s message (9). Husband and wife got into bed, and Kostbera dreamed a dream and immediately told Högni (10). She advised him not to go, as the runes were not an invitation from Guðrún (11); instead, were it not for one missing rune, it looked as though the message predicted the brothers’ death, if

they were to come (12). Högni replied that all women are suspicious, and that he was never fearful (13). Kostbera stressed the danger (14) and told him a series of ominous dreams she had had, to each of which he gave an innocuous interpretation (15–20).

Glaumvør then told Gunnarr of her similarly ominous dreams, to one of which he gave an innocuous interpretation before stating that, although much indicated that he and Högni would soon die, he could not escape fate (21–22, 23–25 [24–26], 26–27 [28–29]).

The next day the company set out, despite further attempts by the women to dissuade them (28–29 [31–31]). Glaumvør told Vingi that she doubted his motives, but he claimed innocence (30–31 [32–33]). Kostbera wished them luck (32 [34]), Högni replied graciously (33 [35]), and husband and wife looked at each other for the last time (34 [36]).

The company rowed strongly (35 [37]), until they saw Buðli's farmstead, where Högni knocked loudly (36 [38]). Vingi confessed his deceit and warned the brothers to leave (37 [39]), but Högni told him to keep quiet (38 [40]). They then killed Vingi (39 [41]). Atli and his men armed themselves, and the two parties exchanged hostile words (40–41 [42–43]). Battle began outside the hall (42 [44]), news of which was brought inside (43 [45]).

Guðrún was immediately enraged (44 [46]), boldly greeted her brothers for the last time (45 [47]), and tried unsuccessfully to reconcile the two sides (46). She then took up a sword (47 [49]), and killed two men, including Atli's brother (48–49 [50–51]). The Niflunar fought a celebrated battle all morning, before Kostbera's sons and brother fell (50–51 [52–53]).

Atli remarked grimly on the loss of his men, including his brothers (52–53 [54–55]), and blamed Guðrún for past losses, including Brynhildr (54 [56]). Guðrún retorted that he had killed her mother and starved her cousin, and thanked the gods for his troubles (55 [57]). Atli urged his men to heap further sorrow on Guðrún (56 [58]), and told them to cut out Högni's heart and to hang Gunnarr and encourage snakes to attack him (57 [59]). Högni told them to do as they wish (58 [60]), but Atli's steward urged them to kill Atli's cook, Hjalli, instead (59 [61]). The cook tried frantically to escape, lamented his lot (60 [62]), and pleaded for his life (61 [63]). Högni, angered by the cook's wailing, took exception to his substitution (62 [64]), whereupon Atli's men returned to Högni, who laughed as they excised his heart (63 [65]). Gunnarr, meanwhile, played a harp with his toes (64 [66]). Both brothers then died, though their prowess lived on (65 [67]).

Atli then taunted Guðrún with her partly self-inflicted loss (66 [68]). She predicted that evil awaited him (67 [69]), and Atli offered her a handmaid and treasures, if they could be reconciled (68 [70]). Guðrún refused the offer and said (to herself?) that, now that Högni was dead, she would be more terrible than ever (69 [71]). She then recalled her happy childhood with her brothers (70 [72]), criticized men's power over

women, and dissemblingly told Atli that he could have his way (71 [73]). Atli gullibly believed her (72 [74]).

Guðrún then organized a funeral feast for her brothers, as did Atli for his men (73 [75]). She remained determined to wreak vengeance on Atli (74 [76]) and called her sons to her (75 [77]). She told them that she intended to kill them (76 [78]). She then did so, and Atli asked where his boys were (77 [79]). She told him that she had fulfilled her promise of vengeance (78–79 [80–81]) and that he had been using their skulls as cups at the feast, drinking their blood (80 [82]), and eating their flesh (81 [83]). She expressed no pride in this deed (82 [84]). Atli remarked on her ferocity (83 [85]). She revealed that she would also like to kill him for his stupidity and cruelty (84 [86]), but he said she would be killed before that happens (85 [87]).

The pair then sat discontentedly in the same house, and Hniflungr, Högni's son, told Guðrún how he hated Atli (86 [88]). He and Guðrún wounded Atli mortally (87 [89]). Atli awoke from sleep, thus wounded, and asked who had killed him (88 [90]). Guðrún told him (89 [91]), and Atli reflected on her duplicity, despite all the wealth she had (90–93 [92–95]), and how she undermined him (94 [96]). Guðrún then called him a liar (95 [97]), and reflected on her glorious past raiding with her brothers and Sigurðr (96–97 [98–99]), until Sigurðr's death put an end to her prospects and she was forced into the torture of marriage to Atli (98 [100]), whom she accused of failure and cowardice (99 [101]). Atli, in turn, accused her of lying, but conceded that all involved had suffered loss, and requested that she treat his corpse honourably (100 [102]). She agreed to giving him a fine ship-burial (101 [103]). Atli then died and Guðrún wanted to commit suicide, but was unable to at that time (102 [104]).

Finally, the poet praises the outstanding deeds of Gjúki's children and their defiant words, which will live on throughout the world, wherever there are people to hear them (103 [105]).

Further Reading

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Atlamál in grøenlenzku

1. 'Frétt hefir qld ófu, þá er endr um gørðu
seggir samkundu — sú var nýtt fæstum!
Œxtu einmæli — yggt var þeim síðan,
ok it sama sonum Gjúka, er váru sannráðnir.
2. 'Skop œxtu Skjoldunga — skylduat feigir! —
illa rézk Atla, átti hann þó hyggju;
feldi stoð stóra, stríddi sér harðla,
af bragði boð sendi at kvæmi brátt mágar.
3. 'Horsk var húsfreyja, hugði at manviti,
lag heyrði hon orða, hvat þeir á laun mæltu;
þá var vant vitri, vildi hon þeim hjálpa —
skyldu um sæ sigla — en sjálf né komskat.
4. 'Rúnar nam at rísta; rengði þær Vingi —
fárs var hann flýtandi — áðr hann fram seldi;
fóru þá síðan sendimenn Atla
um fjørð Lima, þar er frœknir bjoggu.
5. 'Olværir urðu ok elda kyndu,
hugðu vætr véla er þeir váru komnir;
tóku þeir fórnir er þeim fríðr sendi,
hengðu á súlu, hugðut þat varða.
6. 'Kom þá Kostbera — kvæn var hon Högna,
kona kapps gálig — ok kvaddi þá baða;
glöð var ok Glaumvør, er Gunnarr átti,
fellskat saðr sviðri, sýsti um þorf gesta.
7. 'Buðu þeir heim Högna, ef hann þá heldr færi —
sýn var svipvísi, ef þeir sín gæði;
hét þá Gunnarr, ef Hogni vildi,
Hogni því nítti er hinn um réði.
8. 'Báru mjóð mærar, margs var alls beini;
för þar fjolð horna, unz þótti fulldrukkit.

The Greenlandic Poem of Atli

- 1.¹ ‘The world has heard of the hatred² when once
men held an assembly — it was useful to the fewest!³
They pursued⁴ private talks — terror was [forthcoming] for them later,
and the same for the sons of Gjúki, who were truly betrayed.
2. ‘They furthered the fates of Skjoldungar⁵ — they⁶
shouldn’t have been doomed! —
it turned out badly for Atli, even though he had insight;
he felled a great pillar,⁷ harmed himself greatly,
hastily sent a message that his brothers-in-law should come swiftly.
3. ‘The house-lady⁸ was wise, thought with her wits,
she caught the drift of their words, of what they said in secret;
then it was difficult for the wise one,⁹ she wanted to help them¹⁰ —
they had to sail over the sea — but she couldn’t come [there] herself.¹¹
4. ‘She began to carve runes;¹² Vingi¹³ distorted them —
he was a provoker of peril — before he handed them over;
then, afterwards, Atli’s emissaries went
over the fjord of Limi,¹⁴ to where the brave men lived.
5. ‘They¹⁵ were very cordial and kindled fires,
they suspected no tricks when they¹⁶ had come;
they took the gifts which the gracious one(?)¹⁷ sent them,
hung them on a pillar, thought nothing of it.
6. ‘Then Kostbera came — she was Högni’s wife,
a highly observant woman — and greeted them both;¹⁸
also glad was Glaumvør, whom Gunnarr married;¹⁹
decency²⁰ didn’t fail the wise one²¹ — she attended to the guests’ needs.
7. ‘They²² invited Högni home, [to see] if he²³ would then
be more inclined to come —
duplicity was evident, if [only] they’d²⁴ been on their guard;
then Gunnarr promised [to go], if Högni would;
Högni rejected that which he advised.²⁵
8. ‘Splendid ones²⁶ brought mead, hospitality was most lavish,²⁷
a multitude of horns²⁸ went [round] there, until
they thought themselves fully drunk.

9. 'Hjú gørðu hvílu, sem þeim hœgst þótti.
Kend var Kostbera, kunni hon skil rúna,
inti orðstafi at eldi ljósum;
gæta varð hon tungu í góma báða:
váru svá viltar at var vant at ráða.
10. 'Sæing fóru síðan sína þau Högni;
dreymði dróttláta, dulði þess vætki —
sagði horsk hilmi, þegars hon réð vakna:
11. "Heiman gørisk þú, Högni! Hyggðu at ráðum —
fár er fullrýnnin — far þú í sinn annat!
Réð ek þær rúnar, er reist þín systir:
björt hefir þér eigi boðit í sinn þetta!"
12. "Eitt ek mest undrumk — mákat ek enn hyggja —
hvati þá varð vitri, er skyldi vilt rísta;
þvíat svá var á vísat, sem undir væri
bani ykkarr beggja, ef it brálla kvæmið;
vant er stafs vífi, eða valda aðrir."
13. "Allar ru illúðgar," kvað Högni, "áka ek þess kynni,
vilka ek þess leita, nema launa eigm;
okkr mun gramr gulli reifa glóðrauðu;
óumk ek aldregi, þótt vér ógn fregnim!"
14. "Stopalt munuð ganga, ef it stundið þangat;
ykkr mun ástkynni eigi í sinn þetta!
Dreymði mik, Högni — dyljumk þat eigi —
ganga mun ykkr andærис, eða ella hræðumk.
15. "Blæju hugða ek þína brenda í eldi;
hryti hár logi hús mín í gógnum!"
16. "Liggja hér línlæði, þau er lítt rœkið;
þau munu brát brenda, þar er þú blæju sátt."
17. "Björn hugða ek hér inn kominn, bryti upp stokka,
hristi svá hramma, at vér hrædd yrðim;
munni oss mórg hefði, svá at vér mættim ekki;
þar var ok þrómmun þeygi svá litil!"

18. “Veðr mun þar vaxa, verða ótt snemma;
hvítabjörn hugðir, þar mun hregg austan.”
19. “Qrn hugða ek hér inn fljúga at endløngu húsi —
þat mun oss drjúgt deilask — dreifði hann oss ql blóði;
hugða ek af heitum at væri hamr Atla!”
20. “Slátrum sýsliga, sjám þá roðru;
opt er þat fyr oxnum, er ørnu dreymir;
heill er hugr Atla, hvatki er þik dreymir!”
Lokit því létu — líðr hver rœða.
21. ‘Vöknuðu velborin, var þar sams dœmi —
gættisk þess Glaumvør, at væri grand svefna;
tók við Gunnarr at fá tvær leiðir.
22. “Gorvan hugða ek þér gálga — gengir þú at hanga,
æti þik ormar, yrða ek þik kvíkvan,
gørðisk rök ragna! Ráð þú, hvat þat væri!
- 23 [24]. “Blóðgan hugða ek mæki borinn ór serk þínum —
illt er svefn slíkan at segja nauðmanni;
geir hugða ek standa í gógnum þik miðjan,
emjuðu úlfar á endum báðum!”
- 24 [25]. “Rakkar þar renna, ráðask mjók geyja:
opt verðr glaumr hunda fyr geira flaugun.”
- 25 [26]. “Á hugða ek hér inn renna at endiløngu húsi,
þyti af þjósti, þeystisk uf bekki;
bryti foetr ykkra brœðra hér tveggja,
gerðit vatn vægja — vera mun þat fyr nøkkvi!
- 26 [28]. “Konur hugðæk dauðar koma í nótt hingat;
værít vart búnar, vildi þik kjósa,
byði þér brálliga til bekkja sinna;
ek kveð aflima orðnar þér dísir!”
- 27 [29]. “Seinat er at segja, svá er nú ráðit;
forðumka furðu, allz þó er fara ætlat;
mart er mjók glíklíkt at munim skammæir!”

18. ““[That signifies that] a wind will get up, it’ll be dawn soon;
you thought [you saw] a white bear,⁴⁸ [which
means] there’ll be a snowstorm from the east.”
19. ““I thought an eagle flew in here the full length of the house —
it⁴⁹ will be liberally allotted to us — it splattered us all with blood;
I thought from its threats that it was the spirit-form⁵⁰ of Atli!”
20. ““We’ll slaughter [our beasts] soon, then we shall see blood;
it often stands for oxen, when one dreams of eagles,⁵¹
Atli’s heart is sincere, whatever you dream!”
With that they let it⁵² be closed — every conversation ends.
21. “Well-born ones⁵³ awoke, [and] there was an example of the same —
Glaumvør was anxious about it, that there was evil in her dreams;⁵⁴
Gunnarr undertook to find two ways [to interpret them].
22. ““I thought a gallows was prepared for you — you went to be hanged,
snakes ate you,⁵⁵ I lost you as a living [man],
the doom of the powers⁵⁶ came to pass! Read what that was!⁵⁷
- 23 [24]. ““I thought a bloody sword was brought from your shirt —
it’s a bad thing to speak of such a dream to a relative by marriage;
I thought a spear was stuck⁵⁸ through your middle,
wolves howled at both ends!”
- 24 [25]. ““[That’s] dogs running, they bark a lot:
often the din of hounds goes before the flight of spears.”
- 25 [26]. ““I thought a river ran in here the entire length of the house,
roared from rage, surged over benches;
it broke the legs of you two brothers here,
the water didn’t relent — that must signify something!⁵⁹
- 26 [28]. ““I thought dead women came here in the night;
they weren’t carefully clothed, they wanted to choose you,
asked you [to come] quickly to their benches;
I say your spirit-women⁶⁰ have become limbless!”⁶¹
- 27 [29]. ““It’s too late to speak [of this], now it’s been decided thus;
I can’t escape destiny, since it’s been decided that we go;
much [indicates that it’s] very likely that we’ll be short-lived!”

- 28 [30]. 'They saw when it grew light; they said they
were all eager to rise; others would have restrained them;
five went together — twice as many manservants
were available⁶² — it was ill-considered!
Snævarr and Sólarr, they were sons of Hogni,
Orkning⁶³ was the name of the one who also accompanied them;
kindly was the tree of the shield,⁶⁴ the brother of his⁶⁵ wife.

29 [31]. 'Beautifully attired ones went,⁶⁶ until a fjord parted them;⁶⁷
radiant ones⁶⁸ kept restraining [them, but] they⁶⁹
didn't let them speak any the more.

30 [32]. 'Glaumvør, whom Gunnarr married,⁷⁰ said these words,
she spoke to Vingi as seemed to her appropriate:
"I don't know whether you'll repay our hospitality
according to our will;
a guest's coming is a crime, if something [evil] comes of it!"

31 [33]. 'Vingi swore then — he decided to spare himself little! —
"Let giants have him,⁷¹ if he's lied to you,
a complete gallows, if he thought to violate the peace!"

32 [34]. 'Bera⁷² said these words, kindly in her heart:
"Sail with good fortune and secure victory!
May things go as I declare! May the fewest⁷³ have
reason to deny this!"⁷⁴

33 [35]. 'Hogni answered — he was well-disposed toward his kin:
"Comfort yourselves, wise ones,⁷⁵ whatever it is that comes to pass!
Many say this — yet it misses [the mark] entirely! —
[that] for many a man it matters little how he's led⁷⁶ from home."

34 [36]. 'They looked at each other then, before they parted;
then, I think, destiny⁷⁷ parted [them],⁷⁸ their ways separated.

35 [37]. 'They began to row mightily, ripped half the keel apart,
struck [the water] with backward leaning,⁷⁹ became rather wrathful
oar-thongs snapped, thole-pins broke;
they did not make to tie up the boat before they turned from it.

36 [38]. 'And a little later — I will tell this [tale] to the end —
they saw standing the farmstead⁸⁰ that Buðli owned;
the gates creaked loudly when Hogni beat them.

- 37 [39]. ‘Orð kvað þá Vingi, þats án væri:
 “Farið fírr húsi! Flátt er til seckja!
Brátt hefi ek ykkr brenda, bragðs skuluð hoggnir;
fagrt bað ek ykkr kvámu, flátt var þó undir —
ella heðan bíðið, meðan ek hogg yðr gálga!”

38 [40]. ‘Orð kvað hitt Högni — hugði lítt vægja —
 varr at vættugi, er varð at reyna:
“Hirða þú oss hræða! Hafðu þat fram sjaldan!
Ef þú eykr orði, illt mundu þér lengja!”

39 [41]. ‘Hrundu þeir Vinga ok í Hel drápu;
 exar at lögðu, meðan í qnd hixti.

40 [42]. ‘Flykkðusk þeir Atli ok fóru í brynjur,
gengu svá górvir, at var garðr milli;
urpusk á orðum, allir senn reiðir:
“Fyrr várum fullráða at firra yðr lífi!”

41 [43]. “Á sér þat illa, ef höfðuð áðr ráðit!
Enn eruð óbúnir, ok höfum einn feldan,
lamðan til Heljar — liðs var sa yðvars!”

42 [44]. ‘Óðir þá urðu, er þat orð heyrðu,
forðuðu fingrum ok fengu í snöri,
skutu skarpliga ok skjoldum hlífðusk.

43 [45]. ‘Inn kom þá andspilli, hvat úti drýgðu;
 hátt fyr hóllu, heyrðu þrael segja.

44 [46]. ‘Ótul var þá Guðrún, er hon ekka heyrði,
hlaðin hálsmenjunum — hreytti hon þeim gervollum,
sløngði svá silfri, at í sundr hrutu baugar.

45 [47]. ‘Út gekk hon síðan, yppit lítt hurðum;
 fóra fælt þeygi, ok fagnaði komnum;
hvarf til Niflunga — sú var hinzt kveðja —
fylgði saðr slíku, sagði hon mun fleira:

46 [48]. “Leitaða ek í líkna, at letja ykkr heiman —
sköpum viðr mangi — ok skuluð þó hér komnir!”
Mælti af manviti, ef myndu sættask;
ekki at réðusk — allir ní kváðu.

- 37 [39]. 'Then Vingi spoke words, those which could have been done without:
 "Go further away from this house! It's treacherous to approach!
 Quickly I'll have you both burnt,⁸¹ swiftly you shall be hewn down;
 delightfully I asked for your coming, but deceit was behind it —
 or else wait here, while I hew you a gallows!"'
- 38 [40]. 'Högni spoke these words — he thought little of withdrawing —
 [being] wary about nothing that had to be tested:
 "Don't bother to frighten us! Bring [your case] forward⁸² seldom!⁸³
 If you add to your speech, you'll lengthen your ills!"'
- 39 [41]. 'They shoved Vingi away and struck him into Hel,⁸⁴
they laid into him with axes, as long as he gasped for breath.
- 40 [42]. 'Atli and his men mustered themselves and put on⁸⁵ mail-coats,
 they advanced thus prepared, so that there was
 [only] a palisade between them;⁸⁶
 they threw words at each other,⁸⁷ all wrathful at once:
 "We have long been fully resolved to remove you from life!"'
- 41 [43]. '"One can hardly see it,⁸⁸ if you'd planned [this] in advance!
 You're still unprepared, and we've felled one man,
 battered him to Hel — he was [one] of your band!"'
- 42 [44]. 'They became furious then, when they heard those words,
 they flexed their fingers and seized their spear-thongs,
 shot spiritedly and protected themselves with shields.
- 43 [45]. 'Inside came report, then, of what they engaged in outside;
 they heard a slave speak, loudly before the hall.
- 44 [46]. Guðrún was terrible then, when she heard the trouble,
 laden with neck-torcs — she threw them all off,
 slung silver, so that the arm-rings broke asunder.
- 45 [47]. 'Out she went then, didn't raise the doors slightly;⁸⁹
she didn't go timidly at all, and she welcomed those who had come;
 she turned to⁹⁰ the Niflunar — that was their last greeting —
 sincerity accompanied such [a gesture], [and] she said
 considerably more:⁹¹
- 46 [48]. '"I sought to take care of you, by keeping you both from
 leaving home —
no one can oppose fate — and yet you had to have come here!"'
 She spoke with her native wit, [to see] whether
 they would be reconciled;
 they didn't decide that at all — they all said "No!"'

- 47 [49]. 'Sá þá saelborin at þeir sárt léku;
 hugði á harðræði ok hrauzk ór skikkju;
 nökðan tók hon mæki ok niðja fjør varði;
 hœg var at hjaldri, hvars hon hendr festi.
- 48 [50]. 'Dóttir lét Gjúka drengi tvá hníga:
 bróður hjó hon Atla — bera varð þann síðan —
 skapði hon svá skœru, skeldi fót undan.
- 49 [51]. 'Annan réð hon hoggva, svá at sá upp reisat —
 í Helju hon þann hafði; þeygi henni hendr skulfu.
- 50 [52]. 'Þjörku þar gørðu, þeiri var við brugðit;
 þat brá um allt annat er unnu børn Gjúka;
 svá kváðu Niflunga, meðan sjálfir lifðu,
 skapa sókn sverðum — slítask af brynjur —
 hoggva svá hjálma sem þeim hugr dygði.
- 51 [53]. 'Morgin mest vágu, unz miðjan dag líddi —
 óttu alla ok ɔndurðan dag —
 fyrr var fullvegit, flóði vøllr blóði;
 átján, áðr fellu, øfri þeir urðu,
 Beru tveir sveinar ok bróðir hennar.
- 52 [54]. 'Røskr tók at rœða, þótt hann reiðr væri:
 "Illt er um lítask — yðr er þat kenna!
 Várum þrír tigir þegnar vígligr,
 eptir lifum ellifu — ór er þar brunnit!"
- 53 [55]. "Brœðr várum fimm, er Buðla mistum,
 hefir nú Hel hálfa, en hoggnir tveir liggja!
- 54 [56]. "Mægð gat ek mikla — mákak því leyna —
 konu váliga — knáka ek þess njóta!
 Hljótt áttum sjaldan, síz komt í hendr ossar;
 firðan mik froendum, fé opt svikinn;
 senduð systr Helju, slíks ek mest kennumk!"
- 55 [57]. "Getr þú þess, Atli? Gørðir svá fyrri!
 Móður tókt mína ok myrðir til hnossa!
 Svinna systrungu sveltir þú í helli!
 Hlæglikt mér þat þikkir, er þú þinn harm tñir!
 Goðum ek þat þakka, er þér gengsk illa!"

- 47 [49]. ‘Then the high-born one⁹² saw that they were playing bitterly;
she turned her thoughts to harsh deeds and threw off her cloak;
 she seized a naked sword and defended her kinsmen’s lives;
she was able in battle, wherever she firmly applied her hands.
- 48 [50]. ‘Gjúki’s daughter⁹³ made two young men sink [down]:⁹⁴
she hewed Atli’s brother — that one had to be borne [away] then —
 she shaped the battle thus, slashed the leg from beneath him.
- 49 [51]. ‘The other she determined to hew, so that he didn’t get up —
 she had him [put] in Hel,⁹⁵ her hands didn’t shake at all.
- 50 [52]. ‘They engaged in a dispute there, which was extolled;
it outdid all other [deeds] which the children of Gjúki performed;
 so they⁹⁶ said of the Niflungar, while they themselves⁹⁷ lived,
[that] they shaped battle with swords — mail-coats were shredded —
 chopped helmets as their courage availed them.
- 51 [53]. ‘They fought for most of the morning, until midday had passed —
 all through dawn and the day’s forenoon —
before [the battle] was fully fought, the field flooded with blood;
 eighteen they overcame, before they [themselves] fell,
 Bera’s two sons and her brother.
- 52 [54]. ‘The brave one⁹⁸ began to speak, though he was angry:
“It’s an ill thing to look about oneself — that’s owing to you!
 We were thirty valiant thanes,
[only] eleven [still] live afterwards — [part of us]
 has been burnt away⁹⁹ there!”
- 53 [55]. ‘“We were five¹⁰⁰ brothers, when we lost Buðli;
now Hel has half, and two lie hewn down!
- 54 [56]. ‘“I got mighty in-laws — I can’t conceal it —
[but] a pernicious wife — I can’t profit from it!
We’ve seldom had peace, since you came into our hands;
you’ve deprived me of kinsmen, often defrauded me of wealth;
you¹⁰¹ sent my sister¹⁰² to Hel — I suffer most from such!”
- 55 [57].¹⁰³ ‘“Are you [really] bringing that up, Atli? You acted
 like that first!
You took my mother and murdered her for treasures!
 You starved my wise cousin in a cave!¹⁰⁴
Risible it seems to me, when you recount your affliction!
 I thank the gods for it, when things go badly for you!”

- 56 [58]. “Eggja ek yðr, jarlar, auka harm stóran
 vífs ins vegliga — vilja ek þat líta!
 Kostið svá keppa, at kløkkvi Guðrún!
 Sjá ek þat mættak, at hon sér né ynðit!”
- 57 [59]. “Takið ér Högna ok hyldið með knífi!
 Skerið ór hjarta! Skuluð þess gørvir!
 Gunnar grimmúðgan á gálga festið!
 Bellið því bragði! Bjóðið til ormum!”
- ‘Högni kvað:
- 58 [60]. “Gör sem til lystir! Glaðr munk þess bíða!
 Röskr mun þér reynask — reynt hefi ek fyrr brattara!
 Höfðuð hnekking, meðan heilir várum;
 nú erum svá sárir at þú mátt sjálfr valda!”
- 59 [61]. ‘Beiti þat mælti — bryti var hann Atla:
 “Tóku vér Hjalla, en Högna forðum!
 Högum vér hálfþyrkjum — hann er skapdauði!
 Lifira svá lengi — löskr mun hann æ heitinn!”
- 60 [62]. ‘Hræddr var hvergætir, helta in lengr rúmi,
 kunni kløkkr verða, kleif í rá hverja;
 vesall létz vígs þeira, er skyldi vás gjalda,
 ok sinn dag dapran, at deyja frá svínum,
 allri ørkostu er hann áðr hafði.
- 61 [63]. ‘Tóku þeir brás Buðla ok brugðu til knífi;
 cepði illþræll áðr odds kendi;
 tóm létz at eiga teðja vel garða,
 vinna it vergasta, ef hann við rétti;
 feginn létz þó Hjalli at hann fjór þægi!
- 62 [64]. ‘Gættisk þess Högni — gerva svá færi! —
 at árna ánaudgum, at undan gengi:
 “Fyrir kveð ek mér minna at fremja leik þenna —
 hví mynim hér vilja heyra á þá skræktun?”
- 63 [65]. ‘Þrifu þeir þjóðgóðan, þá var kostr engi
 rekkum rakklátum ráð enn lengr dvelja;
 hló þá Högni — heyrðu dagmegir —
 keppa hann svá kunni, kvöl hann vel þolði.

- 56 [58]. ““I urge you, earls, to increase the great affliction
 of the grand woman — I want to gaze on that!
Strive to do your utmost, so that Guðrún may cry out!
I could see it [then], that she’s not content with her lot!”
- 57 [59]. ““Seize Högni and slice away his flesh with a knife!
Cut out his heart! You must be prepared for this!
Fasten grim-minded Gunnarr to a gallows!
Press ahead with that swift¹⁰⁵ deed! Invite snakes to him!”
- 58 [60]. ‘Högni said:
“Do as you wish! I’ll gladly await¹⁰⁶ this!
I’ll prove myself brave to you — I’ve overcome
tougher¹⁰⁷ [trials] before!
You had a setback, as long as we were healthy;
[it’s only] now we’re so wounded that you can have your way!”
- 59 [61]. ‘Beiti¹⁰⁸ said this — he was Atli’s steward:
“Let’s seize Hjalli, and spare Högni!
Let’s finish a deed¹⁰⁹ half-done — he’s fated to die!
He won’t live so long — he’ll always be called sluggish!”¹¹⁰
- 60 [62]. ‘The cauldron-tender¹¹¹ was scared, no longer stayed at his post,
he knew how to be cowardly, climbed into every corner;
he declared himself wretched due to their war,
when his hard work should be rewarded,
and that his day was dreary, in that [he was] to die
away from his swine,
from all the plentiful provisions which he had before.
- 61 [63]. ‘They took Buðli’s braiser¹¹² and brandished a knife at him;
the vile slave screamed before he felt the point;
he said he’d have ample time to manure the enclosed fields well,
to do the shittiest work, if he might survive;
he said Hjalli¹¹³ would be delighted, if only he should receive his life!
- 62 [64]. ‘Högni took exception to this — few¹¹⁴ act thus! —
that an enslaved one¹¹⁵ should gain [that], that he should get away:
“I declare there are fewer things in the way of me
playing out this game —
why would we willingly listen to that screeching?”
- 63 [65]. ‘They seized the excellent one,¹¹⁶ when there was no opportunity
for the resolute warriors to delay their decision still longer;
Högni laughed then — day-labourers¹¹⁷ heard it —
he knew how to be staunch like that, he suffered torment well.

- 64 [66]. 'Hørpu tók Gunnarr, hrærði ilkvistum;
 slá hann svá kunni, at snótir grétu;
 klukku þeir karlar, er kunnu gørst heyra;
 ríkri ráð sagði — raptar sundr brustu!
- 65 [67]. 'Dó þá dýrir — dags var heldr snemma —
 létu þeir á lesti lifa íþróttu.
- 66 [68]. 'Stórr þóttisk Atli — sté hann um þá báða;
 horskri harm sagði ok réð heldr at bregða:
 "Morginn er nú, Guðrún, mist hefir þú þér hollra!
 Sums ertu sjálfskapa, at hafi svá gengit!"
- 67 [69]. "Feginn ertu, Atli — ferr þú víg lýsa;
 á munu þér iðrar, ef þú allt reynir!
 Sú mun erfð eptir — ek kann þér segja:
 ills gengsk þér aldri, nema ek ok deyja!"
- 68 [70]. "Kannka ek slíks synja, sé ek til ráð annat,
 hálfu hógligra — hoftnum opt góðu:
 mani mun ek þík hugga, mætum ágætum,
 silfri snæhvítu, sem þú sjálf vilir!"
- 69 [71]. "Ón er þess engi — ek vil því níta!
 Sleit ek þá sáttir, er váru sakar minni!
 Afkár ek áðr þóttak, á mun nú gœða!
 Hraefða ek um hotvetna, meðan Hogni lifði!
- 70 [72]. "Alin vit upp várum í einu húsi,
 lékum leik margan ok í lundi óxum,
 gœddi okkr Grímildr gulli ok hálsmenjum;
 bana mundu mér brœðra böta aldregi,
 né vinna þess ekki, at mér vel þikki!"
- 71 [73]. "Kostum drepr kvenna karla ofríki!
 Í kné gengr hnifi ef kvistir þverra!
 Tré tekr at hnígá ef høggr tág undan!
 Nú máttu einn, Atli, qllu hér ráða!"
- 72 [74]. 'Gnótt var grunnýðgi er gramr því trúði!
 Sýn var sveipvísi, ef hann sín gæði!
 Krøpp var þá Guðrún, kunni um hug mæla;
 létt hon sér gørði, lék hon tveim skjoldum!

- 64 [66]. 'Gunnarr took a harp, stirred it with his sole-twigs;¹¹⁸
he struck¹¹⁹ it as he knew how, so that women sobbed;
those men cried out, who could hear it most clearly;
he spoke of his plight to a powerful one¹²⁰ — rafters burst asunder!
- 65 [67]. 'Then the dear ones¹²¹ died — it was rather early in the day —
they let their acts of prowess live on at the last.
- 66 [68]. 'Atli thought himself great — he overcame them both then;
he told the wise one¹²² of her sorrow and determined
to taunt her somewhat:
"It's morning now, Guðrún, [and] you've lost those loyal to you!
You yourself are partly responsible for things having gone thus!"
- 67 [69]. "You're delighted, Atli — you go to declare the killings;¹²³
regrets will beset you, if you put all things to the test!¹²⁴
That will be your inheritance thereafter — I know how to tell you:
never shall evil depart from you, unless I also die!"
- 68 [70]. "I can't disprove such [an outcome], [but] I foresee
another eventuality,
more fitting by half — [though] we often refuse what's good:
I'll console you with a handmaid, with celebrated treasures,
with snow-white silver, as you yourself may wish!"
- 69 [71].¹²⁵ "There's no prospect of that — I'll refuse it!
I've broken covenants [before], when the causes were less!
I seemed terrible before, [but] now it¹²⁶ will be enhanced!
I endured everything, as long as Högni lived!
- 70 [72]. "We were both brought up in one¹²⁷ house,
we played many a game and grew up in its grove,
Grímildr¹²⁸ endowed us with gold and neck-torcs;
you'll never compensate me for the death of my brothers,
nor do anything about this that would seem well to me!
- 71 [73]. "Men's overbearing might strikes down women's choices!
The fist drops to its knee if the twigs dwindle!¹²⁹
A tree starts to fall if one hews the rootstock from under it!
Now you alone, Atli, can have your way in everything here!"
- 72 [74]. 'Credulity was abundant when the prince¹³⁰ believed that!
Treachery was apparent, if he'd been on his guard!
Guðrún was inscrutable then, knew how to speak dissemblingly;
she lightened her demeanour, she "played with two shields"¹³¹!

- 73 [75]. 'Cexti hon qldrykkjur at erfa broeðr sína;
 samr létz ok Atli at sína górvva.
- 74 [76]. 'Lokit því létu; lagat var drykkju;
 sú var samkunda við svørfun ofmikla;
 strøng var stórhuguð, stríddi hon ætt Buðla,
 vildi hon ver sínum *vinna* ofrhefndir.
- 75 [77]. 'Lokkaði hon litla ok lagði við stokki;
 glúpnuðu grimmir, ok grétu þeygi;
 fóru í faðm móður, fréttu hvat þá skyldi.
- 76 [78]. "Spyrið lítt eptir! Spilla ætla ek báðum!
 Lyst várumk þess lengi, at lyfja ykkr ellí!"
"Blótt, sem vilt, børnum — bannar þat mangi!
 Skømm mun ró reiði, ef þú reynir górvva!"
- 77 [79]. 'Brá þá barnæsku brœðra in kappsvinna,
 skiptit skapliga — skar hon á háls báða!
 Enn frétti Atli hvert farnir væri
 sveinar hans leika, er hann sá þá hvergi.
- 78 [80]. "Yfir ráðumk ganga Atla til segja;
 dylja munk þik eigi, dóttir Grímildar;
 glaða mun þik minnzt, Atli, ef þú górvva reynir,
 vakðir vá mikla er þú vátt brœðr mína!
- 79 [81]. "Svaf ek mjøk sjaldan, síðans þeir fellu;
 hét ek þér hørðu, hefi ek þik nú mintan;
 morgin mér sagðir — man ek enn þann górvva —
 nú er ok aptann, átt þú slíkt at fréttta!
- 80 [82]. "Maga hefir þú þinna mist, sem þú sízt skyldir!
 Hausa veizt þú þeira hafða at qlskálum!
 Drýgða ek þér svá drykkju: dreyra blett ek þeira!
- 81 [83]. "Tók ek þeira hjørtu ok á teini steiktak;
 selda ek þér síðan, sagðak at kálfs væri!
 Einn þú því ollir — ekki réttu leifa —
 toggtu tíðliga, trúðir vel jøxlum!

- 73 [75]. ‘She organized a great ale-drinking-feast to commemorate
her brothers;
Atli said he would also do the same for his men.
- 74 [76]. ‘They let [matters lie] closed thus; drink was prepared;
that was a meeting with too much tumult;
strong was the great-spirited one,¹³² she tormented the family of Buðli,
she wanted to wreak acts of extreme vengeance on her husband.
- 75 [77]. ‘She lured her little ones and laid them against a bench-edge;
the fierce ones¹³³ were afraid, and [yet] cried not at all;
they went into their mother’s embrace, asked what
would happen then.
- 76 [78]. ‘“Ask little about [that]!¹³⁴ I intend to destroy you both!
Long was I eager for this, that I should relieve you of old age!”¹³⁵
“Sacrifice, as you wish, your children — no one forbids it!
Fleeting will be wrath’s respite,¹³⁶ if you put things fully to the test!”¹³⁷
- 77 [79]. ‘Then the one of swift martial spirit¹³⁸ destroyed the
brothers’ childhood,
didn’t deal [with them] as was seemly¹³⁹ — she slit both their necks!
Still Atli asked where his boys had gone
to play, since he saw them nowhere.
- 78 [80]. ‘“I’m determined to go over¹⁴⁰ to tell Atli;
I, Grímildr’s daughter, won’t conceal it from you;
it will gladden you least,¹⁴¹ Atli, if you experience [matters] fully;
you awoke¹⁴² great woe when you slew my brothers!
- 79 [81]. ‘“I’ve slept very seldom since they fell;¹⁴³
I promised you harshness, I have now reminded you;
you spoke to me one morning — I still remember it exactly —
and now it’s evening, you ought to hear of such!
- 80 [82]. ‘“You’ve lost your sons, as you least should!
You’ve had their skulls, you know, as ale-cups!¹⁴⁴
I enriched your drink thus: I blended it with their blood!
- 81 [83]. ‘“I seized their hearts and roasted them on a spit;
I gave them to you then — I said it was calf’s [meat])!
You alone finished it off¹⁴⁵ — you determined to leave nothing —
you munched greedily, trusted well in your molars!

- 82 [84]. “Barna veiztu þinna — biðr sér fár verra —
 hlut veld ek mínum, hœlumk þó ekki.”
- 83 [85]. “Grimm vartu, Guðrún, er þú gøra svá máttir,
 barna þinna blóði at blanda mér drykkju!
 Snýtt hefr þú sifjungum, sem þú sízt skyldir,
 mér lætr þú ok sjálfum millum ills lítit.”
- 84 [86]. “Vili mér enn væri at vega þik sjálfan —
 fátt er fullilla farit við gram slíkan;
 drýgt þú fyrr hafðir þat er menn doemi vissut
 til heimsku, harðræðis, í heimi þessum;
 nú hefir þú enn aukit þat er nú áðan frágum,
 greipt gloep stóran — gjort hefir þú þitt erfi!”
- 85 [87]. “Brend mundu á báli ok barið grjóti áðr;
 þá hefir þú árnat þatztu æ beiðisk!”
 “Seg þér slíkar sorgir ár margin!
 Fríðra vil ek dauða fara í ljós annat!”
- 86 [88]. ‘Sátu samtýnís, sendusk fárhugi,
 hendusk heiptyrði — hvártki sér unði.
 Heipt óx Hniflungi, hugði á stórræði,
 gat fyr Guðrúnú at hann væri grimmr Atla.
- 87 [89]. ‘Kómu í hug henni Högna viðfarar,
 talði happ honum, ef hann hefnt ynni;
 veginn var þá Atli — var þess skammt bíða —
 sonr vá Högna ok sjálf Guðrún.
- 88 [90]. ‘Røskr tók at rœða, rakðisk ór svefni,
 kendi brátt benja, bands kvað hann þørf ɔnga:
 “Segið it sannasta: hverr vá son Buðla?
 Emka ek lítt leikinn, lífs tel ek vón ɔnga!”
- 89 [91]. “Dylja mun þik eigi dóttir Grímildar:
 látumk því valda, er líðr þína ævi,
 en sumu sonr Högna, er þik sár mœða!”
- 90 [92]. “Vaðit hefir þú at vígi, þótt værit skaplikt;
 illt er vin véla, þanns þér vel trúir!
 Beiddr fór ek heiman at biðja þín, Guðrún!

- 91 [93]. “Leyfð vartu ekkja, létu stórráða,
varða ván lygi, er vér um reyndum;
fórtu heim hingat, fylgði oss herr manna,
allt var ítarlikt um órar ferðir.
- 92 [94]. “Margs var alls sómi manna tíginna,
naut váru cerin, nutum af stórum;
þar var fjöld fjár, fengu til margir.
- 93 [95]. “Mund galt ek mærri, meiðma fjöld þiggja,
þræla þrjá tigu, þýjar sjau góðar;
sœmð var at slíku, silfr var þó meira.
- 94 [96]. “Léztu þér allt þíkkja, sem ekki væri,
meðan lönd þau lágu er mér leifði Buðli;
gróftu svá undir, gerðit hlut þiggja.
Sværū léztu þína sitja opt grátna;
fanka ek í hug heilum hjóna vætr síðan.”
- 95 [97]. “Lýgr þú nú, Atli, þótt ek þat lítt rœkja;
heldr, var ek høg sjaldan, hóftu þó stórum!
Børðuzk ér brœðr ungar, bárusk róg milli;
hálf gekk til Heljar ór húsi þínu;
hroldi hotvetna, þat er til hags skyldi.
- 96 [98]. “Prjú várum systkin, þóttum óvægin,
fórum af landi, fylgðum Sigurði;
skæva vér létum, skipi hvert vårt stýrði,
ørkuðum at auðnu, unz vér austr kvómum.
- 97 [99]. “Konung drápum fyrstan, kurum land þaðra,
hersar oss á hønd gengu — hræzlu þat vissi;
vágum ór skógi þanns vildum syknan;
settum þann sælan er sér né áttit.
- 98 [100]. “Dauðr varð inn húnski — drap þá brátt kosti;
strangt var angr ungrí ekkju naðn hljóta;
kvöl þótti kvikri at koma í hús Atla;
átti áðr kappi — illr var sá missir.
- 99 [101]. “Komtaðu af því þingi, er vér þat frægim,
at þú sök sóttir né slekðir aðra:
vildir ávalt vægja, en vætki halda,
kyrt um því láta . . .”

- 91 [93]. ““You were a praised widow, one of great plans, they said,
 [and] expectation was no lie, as we found out;
you came to our home here, an army of men accompanied us,
 everything was noble about our entourages.¹⁶⁰
- 92 [94]. ““There was much honour of all kinds for¹⁶¹ men of high rank,
 cattle were plentiful, we profited from them greatly;
there was an abundance of wealth, many availed themselves of it.
- 93 [95]. ““I paid the bride-price for the glorious one, an abundance
 of treasures to give,¹⁶²
 thirty male slaves, seven good bondmaids;
there was honour in such — the silver, however, was worth more.
- 94 [96]. ““You said everything seemed to you as if it were nothing,
 as long as the lands which Buðli left me lay unused(?);
you undermined [me?], so that one didn’t accept a share(?).¹⁶³
 You made your mother-in-law often sit weeping;
 I never found the household in good heart thereafter.”
- 95 [97]. ““You’re lying now, Atli, though I care little about it;
rather, I was seldom docile, but you extolled yourself hugely!
 You young brothers fought amongst yourselves,
 traded slanders between you;
 half went to Hel from your house;
everything faltered, that which should have been to our advantage.
- 96 [98]. ““We were three siblings,¹⁶⁴ we seemed invincible,
 we journeyed from shore, accompanied Sigurðr;
we made ourselves speed ahead, each of us steered a ship,
 we roved according to fate, until we came to the east.
- 97 [99]. ““We slew a king first, we chose land there,
 chieftains surrendered to us — that showed fear;
 by fighting we freed from the wood¹⁶⁵ the one
 whom we wanted exempt from punishment;
we placed in prosperity the one who possessed nothing himself.
- 98 [100]. ““Dead became the Hunnish one¹⁶⁶ — [that] soon killed
 my opportunities then;
it was a strong anguish for a young woman to be allotted
 the name of widow;
it seemed torture for a living one to come into Atli’s house;
a champion had married¹⁶⁷ me before — that was an ill loss.
- 99 [101]. ““You didn’t come¹⁶⁸ from the assembly, as we’ve heard it,
such that you’d argued your case [successfully] or quashed another’s:
 you always wanted to give way, and never hold [your ground],
 to acquiesce quietly about it . . .”¹⁶⁹

- 100 [102]. “You’re lying now, Guðrún, [and] little will it improve
 the lot of either of us — we’ve all suffered loss!
 Act now, Guðrún, out of your goodness,
 according to our¹⁷⁰ honour, when they carry me out!”
- 101 [103]. “I will buy a ship¹⁷¹ and a stained¹⁷² coffin,
 wax well the shroud to wrap your body,
 think of every necessity, as if we two were well-disposed
 [to each other].”
- 102 [104]. ‘Atli became a corpse then, increased grief for his kinsmen;
 the nobly born one¹⁷³ carried out all that she had promised;
 wise Guðrún wanted to go and destroy herself;
 a delay of days came about — she died on another occasion.
- 103 [105]. ‘Happy is each one¹⁷⁴ thereafter who gets to father
 such offspring of outstanding deeds, as those which Gjúki sired!
 Their defiant words will live after them in every land,
 wherever there are people listening!’

Textual Apparatus to *Atlamál in grænlenzku*

Atlamál in grænlenzku] This poem's rubricated, but faded, title is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this edition therefore relies on the transcription therein, in which the words *atla mal in* are bracketed

1/1 *Frétt*] The first letter is large, half-inset and rubricated, but faded, in R

2/8 *brátt*] R *brat*

11/2 *hyggðu*] R *hygðv*

12/5 *á vísat*] R *am sat*

17/5 *munni*] R *mvN*

17/5 *oss*] R *os*

21/5 *tók*] Absent from R

27/3 *furðu*] R *for-* / *þo*

33/8 *verðr*] R *verþ*

45/1 *hon*] R *han*

53/1 *fímm*] R *v.*

54/3 *konu*] R *kona*

61/3 *illþræll*] R *ill þræ*

66/3 *horski*] R *hoscri*

68/5 *mani*] R *maNi*

69/1 *engi*] R *engia*

69/7 *hotvetna*] R *hovetna*

74/8 *vinna*] R absent

77/3 *skiptit*] R *scriptiz*

94/9 *fanka*] R *fan* with *-ca* erased

95/4 *hóftu*] R *hostu*

97 *áttit*] Below this word R has a drawing of a dragon's head and neck

98/4 *nafn*] R *nam*

99/8] R has a blank space here, sufficient for one half-line of verse

Notes to the Translation

1 This edition encloses the words of *Am.* in framing quotation marks on the basis of the first-person passages in stt. 34 [36], 36 [38].

2 Or 'malice'.

3 I.e., it helped none.

- 4 The verb *æxtu*, literally '(they) grew', suggests a mounting conspiracy.
- 5 I.e., they plotted the deaths of princes, here Gunnarr and Högni. The *Skjoldungar* 'Shieldings' were originally the Danish royal dynasty; cf. the reference to Limfjord, Denmark in *Am.* 4.
- 6 Gunnarr and Högni.
- 7 Perhaps the support of Gunnarr and Högni.
- 8 Guðrún.
- 9 Guðrún. Alternatively, translate 'then the wise one was in want/need'.
- 10 Gunnarr and Högni.
- 11 I.e., she could not herself visit her brothers at their home.
- 12 Or simply 'She carved runes'.
- 13 One of Atli's messengers. His name perhaps hints at the meaning 'Not a Friend'.
- 14 Limfjord, Denmark.
- 15 The hosts.
- 16 Atli's messengers.
- 17 Atli. Alternatively, there may be a reference to Guðrún as 'fair one' or 'woman'.
- 18 The messengers.
- 19 Literally, 'owned'.
- 20 Literally, 'truth'.
- 21 Glaumvør.
- 22 Atli's messengers.
- 23 Gunnarr.
- 24 Gunnarr, his family and their followers.
- 25 In other words, Högni said he thought Gunnarr's decision to accept Atli's invitation was ill-advised (cf. *Akv.* 8–9); this need not mean, however, that Högni refused to go. Alternatively, emend *nítti* to *níttit* 'did not reject'.
- 26 I.e., fine women.
- 27 More literally, 'there was hospitality of all [kinds in] many [respects]'.
- 28 Drinking-horns.
- 29 Högni and Kostbera.
- 30 Runic letters.
- 31 I.e., speak quietly.
- 32 The runes.
- 33 Kostbera.
- 34 Her dream.
- 35 Kostbera.
- 36 Högni.
- 37 It appears that Gunnarr has decided to visit Atli, and that Högni will go with him.
- 38 Guðrún.
- 39 Or 'pessimistic'.
- 40 I.e., the evil you speak of.

- 41 Atli.
- 42 In VS 36 a corresponding prose passage constitutes Högni's interpretation of Kostbera's first dream about a raging river.
- 43 I.e., you'll take a tumble, meet your downfall.
- 44 I.e., contrary to the desired course, backwards, awry.
- 45 Alternatively, 'or else I fear (too much)' or 'or else I fear for myself'. This stanza has no parallel in VS 36.
- 46 I.e., dreamt.
- 47 Stt. 15 and 16 might also be considered a single stanza.
- 48 I.e., a polar bear.
- 49 I.e., misfortune.
- 50 Literally 'skin'. People's spirits were believed to manifest themselves as creatures in dreams and visions. People were also believed to become like, or even to transform into, the creatures whose skins they wore as clothes, as in *Prk.* 3–5 and the prose introduction to *Vkv.*
- 51 Possibly a deliberately absurd explanation, indicative of Högni's exasperation with his wife's cautions.
- 52 Their discussion.
- 53 Glaumvør and Gunnarr.
- 54 Literally, 'that it was a harm of dreams'.
- 55 Perhaps in this version of the story Gunnarr is attacked by snakes as he hangs from a gallows; cf. *Am.* 57 [59]. Only hanging is commanded by Atli in *Am.* 57.
- 56 Ragnarok, the Norse apocalypse.
- 57 I.e., interpret that dream. No corresponding dream is found in VS 36. A following stanza in which Gunnarr interprets this dream may be missing. The stanza numbering in NK (here bracketed) assumes omission of one stanza after *Am.* 22 and of another after *Am.* 26.
- 58 Literally, 'stood'.
- 59 In VS 36 it is Kostbera, not Glaumvør, who dreams this dream. In fact, Kostbera relates two corresponding dreams, which begin the series of visions that she relates to Högni. Högni's interpretation of Kostbera's second, longer dream is that '*þar munu renna akrar, er þú hugðir ána, ok er vér gongum akrinn, nema opt stórar agnir fœtr vára*', 'It will signify rippling [literally, "running"] cornfields, when you thought there was a river, and when we walk through the cornfield, great husks often touch our legs'. A stanza with a corresponding interpretation has probably dropped out of the surviving text of *Am.*
- 60 *Dísir*, here supernatural females suggestive of seductive valkyries and described as 'dead women'.
- 61 I.e., powerless (to help you).
- 62 Literally, 'more manservants were available by half'.
- 63 'Seal Offspring'.
- 64 A kenning for 'warrior', here Orkningr.
- 65 Högni's.
- 66 I.e., women went with the departing men.

- 67 I.e., from the men.
- 68 The women.
- 69 The men.
- 70 Literally, 'owned'.
- 71 Vingi refers to himself in the third person.
- 72 Kostbera, Högni's wife.
- 73 I.e., none.
- 74 The interpretation of the last half-verse is disputed.
- 75 I.e., the women.
- 76 I.e., escorted.
- 77 Literally '(the) fates'.
- 78 Or 'determined (it)'.
- 79 I.e., they leant back as they struck the water with their oars. Alternatively, perhaps, 'struck (the water) with the rudder'.
- 80 Or 'settlement'.
- 81 I.e., destroyed utterly.
- 82 A legal idiom. Högni is being sarcastic.
- 83 I.e., never.
- 84 I.e., they killed him.
- 85 Literally, 'went into'.
- 86 I.e., between the opposing parties.
- 87 I.e., they exchanged insults.
- 88 I.e., it's not obvious.
- 89 I.e., she opened the doors wide.
- 90 This idiom denotes embracing and kissing.
- 91 Literally, 'she said more by a (substantial) difference'.
- 92 Guðrún.
- 93 Guðrún.
- 94 I.e., fall in battle.
- 95 I.e., she killed him.
- 96 People in general.
- 97 The Niflungar.
- 98 Atli.
- 99 I.e., destroyed.
- 100 In a corresponding passage in VS 38, Atli says '*Fjórir váru vér bræðr*' 'We were four brothers'; in the present stanza, some editors emend the manuscript reading *v* (i.e., *fimm* 'five') to *iv* (i.e., *fjórir* 'four'), assuming a simple scribal error.
- 101 Pl. — a reference to Guðrún and her family.
- 102 Brynhildr.
- 103 Guðrún replies.

- 104 These events are otherwise unknown.
- 105 Or ‘bold’.
- 106 Or ‘experience’, ‘endure’.
- 107 Literally, ‘steeper’.
- 108 ‘One who Steers/Sails Near the Wind’; elsewhere in Old Norse literature this name is that of a sea-king.
- 109 Literally, ‘deeds’—probably a poetic pl. that may be translated as sg.
- 110 More idiomatically, ‘However long he lives, he’ll always be called worthless!’
- 111 Hjalli, who is Atli’s cook.
- 112 One who braises, a cook—Hjalli.
- 113 Hjalli refers to himself in the third person.
- 114 Literally, ‘fewer’.
- 115 Hjalli.
- 116 Högni.
- 117 Either workers in the fields or people in general.
- 118 I.e., he stirred it into life by plucking its strings with his toes. Possibly, in this version of the story, Gunnarr plays his harp with his toes while hanging from a gallows, his hands having been bound; cf. *SnESkáld* (I, 42, pp. 48–49). By contrast, *Akv.* 32 has Gunnarr play the harp with his hand while imprisoned in a snake-enclosure. See also *Dr.*
- 119 I.e., played.
- 120 A powerful woman, often supposed to be Guðrún, but possibly rather Oddrún, Atli’s sister (see *Od.* 29).
- 121 Gunnarr and Högni.
- 122 Guðrún.
- 123 A requirement of Icelandic law, if Atli was not to be guilty of *morð* ‘murder’ (concealed killing), but Guðrún appears sarcastic.
- 124 Or ‘if you experience all’.
- 125 Possibly Guðrún speaks this stanza and the next to herself.
- 126 I.e., Guðrún’s terribleness.
- 127 I.e., Guðrún and Högni grew up in the same house.
- 128 Guðrún’s mother.
- 129 Probably an allusion to the board-game *hnefatafl*, literally ‘fist’s table’, which ends when the *hnef* ‘fist’, a king-piece, either escapes its opponents or is captured by them. The loss of the fist’s defending pieces, apparently called *kvistir* ‘twigs’ (i.e., ‘fingers’?), precipitates its capture, here symbolized by the act of kneeling in submission.
- 130 Atli.
- 131 I.e., she played a duplicitous game.
- 132 Guðrún.
- 133 Guðrún’s children.
- 134 I.e., don’t ask at all about that.
- 135 I.e., the potential of living into old age.

- 136 I.e., revenge or angry regret will soon follow.
- 137 These words are apparently spoken by one or both of the children.
- 138 Guðrún.
- 139 Alternatively, emend to *skipti skapliga* ‘she dealt with them fittingly’.
- 140 I.e., to another part of the hall, presumably.
- 141 I.e., it will be your worst nightmare.
- 142 I.e., aroused, stirred up.
- 143 Cf. *Vkv.* 31.
- 144 Cf. *Vkv.* 35.
- 145 Or ‘you alone were responsible for it’.
- 146 I.e., no one asks for.
- 147 I.e., wiped out, killed.
- 148 Literally, ‘full badly’, ‘very badly’.
- 149 I.e., ‘perpetrated’ or perhaps ‘comprehended’, but also with a hint of the verb’s literal sense in view of Atli’s hold on his children’s flesh while eating.
- 150 Possibly as a witch; cf. *Ghv.*’s initial prose and *GD* 8.10.14.
- 151 Alternatively, ‘I want a fairer death to fare ...’.
- 152 I.e., into the next life, another world.
- 153 Högni’s son. His name corresponds to the family-name *Hniflunar* of *HH. I* 48, *Ghv.* 12. In *VS* 40, he is called *Niflungr*.
- 154 Or ‘slain’
- 155 Or ‘slew’.
- 156 Atli.
- 157 Or ‘for a bond/fetter’ with which to take him captive (since he was dying).
- 158 Atli refers to himself in the third person.
- 159 Literally ‘little’; Atli recognizes that he has been seriously deceived.
- 160 Or ‘journeys’, ‘behaviour’, ‘circumstances’, ‘lives’.
- 161 Or ‘of’, ‘possessed by’.
- 162 I.e., ‘giving an abundance of treasures’; less likely, ‘to receive an abundance of treasures’.
- 163 The meaning is uncertain. Perhaps Atli intended to give part of these lands away, but Guðrún, to keep them under her control, undermined him, so that the intended recipient refused to accept them.
- 164 Guðrún, Gunnarr and Högni.
- 165 I.e., from outlawry (outlaws were often confined to woods).
- 166 Sigurðr; see note to *Sg.* 4.
- 167 Literally, ‘owned’.
- 168 I.e., ‘you’ve never come from’.
- 169 This stanza seems to have lost its final half-line.
- 170 Atli uses the dual form *okkr*, referring to himself and Guðrún together.

- 171 Specifically, a large, ocean-going trading ship. Atli will apparently be buried in a coffin within a ship—a form of burial for which there is no known archaeological evidence.
- 172 Painted.
- 173 Guðrún.
- 174 I.e., every man.

Guðrúnarhvöt

Guðrúnarhvöt (*Ghv.*) ‘Guðrún’s Incitement’ (R fol. 44r–v) is a short but effective poem in *fornyrðislag*. It is prefaced by a prose passage about the main character, Guðrún, which records that, after killing Atli, she was driven over the sea to the land of King Jónakr, with whom she had three sons: Sǫrli, Erpr and Hamðir.

The preface is of considerable interest for its summary of the circumstances of the execution of Svanhildr, daughter of Guðrún and Sigurðr, by Jormunrekkr (a reflex of the historical fourth-century Ostrogothic King Ermaneric). This preserves a variant memory of an event also recorded by Jordanes in his *De origine actibusque Getarum* ‘On the Origin and Deeds of the Getae [Goths]’ (c. 551), commonly known as the *Getica*. Jordanes records that:

When the Getae [i.e., Goths] beheld this active race [i.e., the Huns] that had invaded many nations, they took fright and consulted with their king how they might escape from such a foe. Now although Hermaneric [= Ermaneric, ON *Jormunrekkr*], king of the Goths, was the conqueror of many tribes, as we have said above, yet while he was deliberating on this invasion of the Huns, the treacherous tribe of the Rosomoni, who at that time were among those who owed him their homage, took this chance to catch him unawares. For when the king had given orders that a certain woman of the tribe I have mentioned, Sunilda [= ON *Svanhildr*] by name, should be bound to wild horses and torn apart by driving them at full speed in opposite directions (for he was roused to fury by her husband’s treachery to him), her brothers Sarus [= ON *Sǫrli*] and Ammius [= ON *Hamðir*] came to avenge their sister’s death and plunged a sword into Hermaneric’s side. Enfeebled by this blow, he dragged out a miserable existence in bodily weakness.¹

It is to avenge the killing of Svanhildr by being trodden (rather than torn apart) by horses that Guðrún—whose involvement in the story is unique to Norse tradition—incites her sons in *Ghv.*, the vengeance being enacted in the next poem, *Hm*. Guðrún’s successful *hvöt* ‘whetting’ of Hamðir and Sǫrli initially prompts her to laugh (7), but then, in a dramatic contrast, soon after to weep (9), as, presumably prompted by the

1 C. C. Mierow, *The Gothic History of Jordanes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1915), p. 87. For the original Latin, see T. Mommsen, *Jordanis: Romana et Getica*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi 5 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1882), p. 91. Jordanes adds that Hermanericus eventually died at the age of one hundred and ten. How much of Jordanes’ account is fourth-century history and how much subsequent legend has been much debated. Earlier, the fourth-century Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus records that Ermaneric committed suicide and makes no mention of Sunilda, Sarus or Ammius.

realization that her sons are now doomed, she reflects on her past losses. Most grievous of these was Sigurðr, to whom she calls out, before ordering the creation of a pyre on which she will burn and thus make her way to him in Hel. Comparable are Brynhildr's preparations of a pyre in *Sg.*, a poem in which Brynhildr also prophesies Svanhildr's death. The two poems also share similar powerful imagery of an icy woman melting in the heat of funereal flames.

More details of the events described in the initial prose appear in chapters 41–42 of VS. Chapter 43 of VS is a prose paraphrase of a version of *Ghv*. See also *SnEskáld* 42 (I, p. 49). For other parallels, see the commentary to *Hm*.

Synopsis

Prose: After killing Atli, Guðrún tried to drown herself in the sea, but was unable to sink. She was swept over the water to King Jónakr, who married her. They had three sons: Sqrli, Erpr and Hamðir. Svanhildr, Guðrún's daughter by Sigurðr, also grew up there. She married Jormunrekkr, but was accused of adultery with her stepson, Randvér, at the instigation of Bikki, the king's counsellor. Jormunrekkr had Randvér hanged and Svanhildr trampled to death by horses. Upon hearing that, Guðrún spoke to her sons.

Verse: The poet introduces Guðrún's incitement of her sons to avenge Svanhildr (1). Guðrún asks why they are inactive when their sister has been trampled to death (2). She castigates them for lacking the spirit of Gunnarr and Hunnish kings (3). Hamðir replies that she would not have praised Högni (and implicitly Gunnarr) for killing Sigurðr (4), and that she brought more misery on herself, and weakened their capacity to avenge Svanhildr, by killing her sons by Atli (5). Nevertheless, he commands precious war-gear to be brought in—she has successfully incited them to kill Jormunrekkr (6). Guðrún, laughing, brings their equipment, and the two brothers mount their horses (7).

Hamðir intimates that they will not return alive (8). Guðrún goes to sit on the threshold to recount her sorrows (9).

Guðrún declares that she has had three husbands, of whom the best by far was Sigurðr, whom her brothers killed (10). Still, she says, they heaped more pain on her by marrying her to Atli (11). In response she beheaded her sons by Atli (12), before failing to drown herself (13). She recalls that she bore children to Jónakr (14), but that the best of her children was the sun-like Svanhildr (15). She dressed her in finery, but Jormunrekkr had her fair hair trampled in the mud by horses (16). She recalls Sigurðr's killing again, and those of Gunnarr and Högni (17). She commands Sigurðr (who is dead) to ride to her (18), and asks whether he recalls his promise to visit her from Hel (19). She commands a huge pyre to be made, so that her sorrows may melt (20). She (or the poet?) then expresses a wish that the recitation of this poem may improve the lot of noblemen and alleviate women's sorrows (21).

Further Reading

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Frá Guðrúnu

Guðrún gekk þá til sævar, er hon hafði drepit Atla. Gekk út á sæinn ok vildi fara sér. Hon mátti eigi sökkva. Rak hana yfir fjörðinn á land Jónakrs konungs. Hann fekk hennar. Þeira synir váru þeir Sørli ok Erpr ok Hamðir. Þar föddisk upp Svanhildr, Sigurðar dóttir. Hon var gipt Jörmunrekk inum ríkja. Með honum var Bikki. Hann réð þat, at Randvér, konungs sonr, skyldi taka hana. Þat sagði Bikki konungi. Konungr létt hengja Randvé, en troða Svanhildi undir hrossa fótum. En er þat spurði Guðrún, þá kvaddi sonu sína.

Guðrúnarhvöt

1. 'Þá frá ek sennu slíðrfengligsta,
trauð mál, talið af trega stórum,
er harðhuguð hvatti at vígi
grímmum orðum Guðrún sonu.
2. "Hví sitið? Hví sofið lífi?
Hví tregrat ykkr teiti at mæla,
er Jörmunrekkr yðra systur,
unga at aldri, jóm of traddi,
hvítum ok svörtum, á hervegi,
grám, gangtönum Gotna hrossum?
3. "Urðua it glíkir þeim Gunnari,
né in heldr hugðir, sem var Högni;
hennar mynduð it hefna leita,
ef it móð ættið minna broeðra
eða harðan hug Húnkonunga!"
4. 'Þá kvað þat Hamðir inn hugumstóri:
"Lítt mundir þú leyfa dáð Högna,
þá er Sigurð vökðu svefni ór;
þeikr váru þínar, inar bláhvítu,
roðnar í vers dreyra, fólgnar í valblóði!
5. "Urðu þér broeðra hefndir
slíðrar ok sárar er þú sonu myrðir;
knættim allir Jörmunrekki,
samhyggjendr, systur hefna!
6. "Berið hnossir fram Húnkonunga!
Hefir þú okkr hvatta at hjörþingi!"

About Guðrún

Guðrún went then to the sea, when she had killed Atlí. She went out into the sea and wanted to do away with herself. She could not sink. She was driven over the fjord to the land of King Jónakr. He married her. Their sons were Sórlí¹ and Erpr² and Hamðir.³ Svanhildr,⁴ Sigurðr's daughter, was raised there. She was married to Jörmunrekkr the mighty. With him was Bikki. He advised this, that Randvér,⁵ the king's son, should take her. Bikki told that⁶ to the king.⁷ The king had Randvér hanged, and Svanhildr trodden under horses' hooves. And when Guðrún heard that, then she addressed her sons.

Guðrún's Incitement

1. ‘Then I heard invective most encompassingly virulent,⁸
 reluctant speech, spoken out of great grief,
 when hard-hearted Guðrún incited her sons
 to killing with grim words.
2. ““Why do you sit? Why do you sleep your life [away]?
 Why doesn't it grieve you two⁹ to speak of glad things,
 when Jörmunrekkr had your¹⁰ sister,¹¹
 young in years, trodden by steeds,
 white and black, on the army-way,¹²
 by the grey, gait-tamed horses of the Gotar?¹³
3. ““You haven't grown like Gunnarr and his men,
 nor any the more shown the same cast of mind as Högni;
 you'd have sought to avenge her,
 if you had the spirit of my brothers
 or the hard heart of the Hún-kings!”¹⁴
4. ‘Then Hamðir the great-hearted said this:
 “Little would you have lauded Högni's deed,
 when they woke Sigurðr from sleep;
 your embroidered coverlets, the blue-white ones,¹⁵
 were reddened in your husband's gore, steeped in slaughter-blood!¹⁶
5. ““Deeds of vengeance for your brothers became¹⁷
 dire and sorrowful for you when you murdered your sons;
 we could all,¹⁸ with one mind,
 have avenged our sister upon Jörmunrekkr!
6. ““Bring forth the treasures of the Hún-kings!
 You have incited us two to a sword-assembly!”¹⁹

7. 'Hlæjandi Guðrún hvarf til skemmu,
 kumbl konunga ór kerum valði,
 síðar brynjur, ok sonum færði;
 hlóðusk móðgir á mara bógu.
8. 'Þá kvað þat Hamðir inn hugumstóri:
 "Svá komak meirr aptr, móður at vitja,
 geir-Njörðr, hniginn á Goðþjóðu,
 at þú erfi at qlí oss drykkir,
 at Svanhildi ok sonu þína!"
9. 'Guðrún grátandi, Gjúka dóttir,
 gekk hon tregliga á tái sitja,
 ok at telja, táruhlýra,
 móðug spjöll á margan veg:
10. "'Prjá vissa ek elda, þprjá vissa ek arna,
 var ek þrimr verum vegin at húsi;
 einn var mér Sigurðr qlllum betri,
 er brœðr míni at bana urðu!
11. "'Svárra sára sákat ek, né kunnu,
 meirr þóttusk mér um stríða,
 er mik qöllingar Atla gáfu!
12. "'Húna hvassa hét ek mér at rúnum;
 máttigak bólva boetr um vinna,
 áðr ek hnóf hófuð af *Hniflungum*!
13. "'Gekk ek til strandar, grøm vark Nornum,
 vilda ek hrinda stríð grið þeira;
 hófu mik, né drekðu, hávar bárur,
 því ek land um sték, at lifa skyldak.
14. "'Gekk ek á beð — hugðak mér fyr betra! —
 þriðja sinni þjóðkonungi;
 ól ek mér jóð, erfivørðu,
 Jónakrs sonum.
15. "'En um Svanhildi sátu þýjar,
 en ek minna barna bazt fullhugðak;
 svá var Svanhildr í sal mínum,
 sem væri scemleitr sólar geisli!

7. 'Laughing, Guðrún turned to the storehouse,
 chose helmet-crests²⁰ of kings from chests,
 broad mail-coats, and brought them to her sons;²¹
 the brave ones loaded themselves onto horses' backs.²²
8. 'Then Hamðir the great-hearted said this:
 'Thus may I come back again, to visit my mother,
 [as] a spear-Njörðr,²³ having sunk [to the ground]²⁴ in Goðbjóð,²⁵
 [at the time] when(?) you would hold²⁶ a funeral feast for all of us,
 for Svanhildr and your sons!'²⁷
9. 'Weeping, Guðrún, Gjúki's daughter,
 went, sorrowful, to sit on the threshold,²⁸
 and to tell, teary-cheeked,
 emotional tales in many a way:
10. '"I knew three fires, I knew three hearths,
 I was conveyed to a house for three husbands;²⁹
 to me, Sigurðr alone was better than all [others],
 [he] whom my brothers did to death!"
11. '"More grievous wounds I didn't see, nor did they³⁰ know,
 [yet] they thought to hurt me more,
 when the noblemen gave me to Atli!"
12. '"My keen cubs³¹ I called to me for a secret conversation;
 I couldn't work a remedy for my ills,
 until I cut the heads off the Hniflungar!"³²
13. '"I went to the shore, I was angry with the Nornir,
 I wanted to thrust aside their severe mercies(?);³³
 high breakers lifted me up, didn't drown me,
 in that I stepped onto land, so that I should live."
14. '"I went to the bed — I had better in mind for myself!³⁴ —
 of a people-king for a third time;
 I bore myself offspring, inheritance-wardens,
 in the sons of Jónakr.³⁵
15. '"And around Svanhildr sat serving-women,
 and I gave my whole heart [to her] as the best of my children;
 thus was Svanhildr in my hall,
 as would be an honourable-looking beam of the sun!"³⁶

16. “Gœdda ek gulli ok guðvefjum,
 áðr ek gæfak Goðþjóðar til;
 þat er mér harðast harma minna
 of þann inn hvíta hadd Svanhildar:
 auri tröddu und jóa fótum.
17. “En sá sárastr er þeir Sigurð minn,
 sigri ræntan, í sæing vágu;
 en sá grimmastri er þeir Gunnari,
 fránir ormar, til fjörs skriðu;
 en sá hvassastr er til hjarta flógu
 konung óblauðan, kvikvan skáru.
18. “Fjolð man ek bólva . . .
 Beittu, Sigurðr, inn blakka mar,
 hest inn hraðfcera, láttu hinig renna!
 Sitr eigi hér snær né dóttir,
 sú er Guðrúnu gæfi hnossir!
19. “Minnzu, Sigurðr, hvat vit mæltum,
 þá er vit á beð bæði sánum,
 at þú myndir mína, móðugr, vitja,
 halr, ór Helju, en ek þín ór heimi?
20. “Hlaðið ér, jarlar, eikikostinn,
 látið þann und hilmi hæstan verða!
 Megi brenna brjóst bólvafullt eldr,
 . . . um hjarta þiðni sorgir!”
21. “Jörlum öllum óðal batni,
 snótum öllum sorg at minni,
 at þetta tregróf um talit væri!””

16. “I endowed her with gold and costly clothes,
before I gave her to the Goðbjóð,³⁷
to me the hardest of my harms
concerns the fair hair of Svanhildr:
they trod it in the mud under horses’ hooves.
17. “But the most grievous [was] when my Sigurðr,
robbed of victory, they slew in bed;
and the grimmest when those shining snakes
slithered to [take] Gunnarr’s life;
but the sharpest when to the heart they flayed (?)
the uncowardly king, cut open the living [man].³⁸
18. “I remember a multitude of evils . . .³⁹
Bridle, Sigurðr, the black steed,
the swift-moving horse, let it run hither!
There sits here neither daughter-in-law nor daughter,
she who would give treasures to Guðrún!
19. “Do you recall, Sigurðr, what we two said,
when we both sat in bed,
that you would visit me, spirited one,
hero, from Hel, and I you from [this] world?
20. “Pile up, earls, the oak-pyre,
let it be highest beneath the king(?)!⁴⁰
May fire burn the breast full of grief,
. . . may sorrows⁴¹ melt around the heart!”⁴²
21. “For all earls, may their lot improve,
for all women, may [their] sorrow diminish,
in that this grief-chain⁴³ was recounted!”⁴⁴

Textual Apparatus to *Guðrúnarhvöt*

Frá Guðrúnū] Rubricated, but faded, in R

Guðrún] The first letter is large, half-inset, slightly ornamented and rubricated, but faded, in R

Guðrúnarhvöt] This rubricated title is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; the reading is therefore reliant on the transcription therein

1/1 *þá*] The first letter is large, half-inset, slightly ornamented and rubricated in R

5/5 *allir*] R absent

7/1 *Guðrún*] R *gundrv*

8/3 *komak*] R *comaz*

11/1 *svárra*] R *svara*

12/6 *Hniflungum*] R *niflvgom*

16/6 *harðast*] R *hardaz*

17/5 *grimmastr*] R *grim / astr*

17/10 *flógu*] R *fló*

18/2] Some text might have been lost at this point, but there is no indication of loss in R

18/3 *Sigurðr*] R *sigvrb*

19/5 *þú*] R *þy*

19/5 *mín*] R *miN*

20/7 . . . um *hjarta*] An initial word beginning with *þ-* has probably dropped out of this half-line, though there is no indication of loss in R

Notes to the Translation

- 1 ‘Small Armoured One’. He corresponds to *Sarus* in Jordanes’ account of the death of *Sunilda* (ON *Svanhildr*) and the revenge attack on the Ostrogothic king (*H*)ermanaricus (ON *Jormunrekkr*) in chapter 24 of his c. 551 *Getica* ‘History of the Goths’.
- 2 ‘Reddish-Brown One’. He is not, by contrast, the full brother of Hamðir and Sǫrli in *Hm.*, and it seems that only two brothers are addressed in the present poem, most likely Hamðir and Sǫrli.
- 3 ‘Covering/Garment Servant’. He corresponds to *Ammius* in Jordanes’ account.
- 4 ‘Swan Battle’. She corresponds to *Sunilda* in Jordanes’ account.
- 5 ‘Shield-Edge Fighter/Consecrator’.
- 6 Randvér’s taking of *Svanhildr* (real or imagined).
- 7 *Jormunrekkr*.
- 8 The speaker is the poet.
- 9 Probably Hamðir and Sǫrli.
- 10 Here *yðra* should perhaps be emended to the dual form *ykkra*.

- 11 Svanhildr.
- 12 Or ‘common highway’.
- 13 Goths. Cf. *Hm.* 3.
- 14 Kings of the Húnar (Huns). This could denote kings of either Atli’s dynasty (the historical Huns) or Sigurðr’s; cf. note to *Sg.* 4.
- 15 I.e., ones with blue and white stripes.
- 16 Cf. *Hm.* 6–7.
- 17 The Old Norse line lacks alliteration and is probably corrupt.
- 18 By supplying *allir* ‘all’, the faulty metre is remedied and the sense improved. In VS 43 Hamðir says ‘*betr mættim vér allir saman drepa Jormunrek konung*’ “we could slay King Jormunrekkr better if we were all together”.
- 19 I.e., to battle.
- 20 I.e., crested helmets.
- 21 Neither *Ghv.* nor *Hm.* records that Guðrún had made her sons’ armour invulnerable to iron weapons, as stated in VS 44, or, as in *SnEskáld* (I, 42, p. 49), that she had given them mail-coats and helmets so strong that iron could not penetrate them.
- 22 Literally, ‘shoulders’.
- 23 I.e., a warrior, here Hamðir. Njörðr was a god, one of the Vanir.
- 24 I.e., fallen in battle.
- 25 The nation of the gods; alternatively, perhaps *Gotþjóð*, the Gothic nation; cf. *Ghv.* 16.
- 26 Literally, ‘drink’.
- 27 The precise sense of Hamðir’s words is uncertain, but he is probably being ironic and does not expect to return home alive. He perhaps alludes to the power, which he lacks, of the Vanir gods, led by Njörðr, to resurrect themselves from the dead (see *Vsp.* 24). The corresponding passage in VS 43 reads: ‘*Her munu vér skilja efsta sinni, ok spyrrja muntu tíðendin, ok muntu þá em drekka eptir okkr ok Svanhildi*’ “Here we will part for the last time, and you will hear the tidings, and you will then hold a funeral feast for us two [i.e., Hamðir and Sörli] and for Svanhildr”.
- 28 Cf. *Hm.* 1.
- 29 Sigurðr, Atli and Jónakr.
- 30 Guðrún’s brothers.
- 31 Her sons by Atli. There is probably a pun on *Húna* ‘Huns’.
- 32 Her sons by Atli. *Hniflunar*, a variant of *Niflungs* ‘Nibelungs’, was originally a name for members of the Burgundian royalty.
- 33 The Old Norse line lacks alliteration and is probably corrupt; the translation of this line is uncertain. Emendation of *stríð grið* ‘severe mercies(?)’ to *hriðgríð* ‘stormy vehemence’ is a potential fix. The Nornir are the Northern Fates.
- 34 I.e., death.
- 35 Half the final line of this stanza may well be missing. If so, the omission might simply be of a repetition of *erfiþvördū* ‘inheritance-wardens’.
- 36 Cf. Svanhildr’s description in VS 41.
- 37 The Gothic people. R’s *Goðþjóðar* should perhaps be emended to *Gotþjóðar*. Cf. *Ghv.* 8.

- 38 Högni.
- 39 It is likely that at least one half-line, probably more, has been lost at this point. It is doubtful whether the surviving half-line and the following four full lines were originally part of the same stanza.
- 40 Here *und hilmi* 'under (the) king' may well be a mistake for *und himni* 'under sky/heaven', as the pyre is probably for Guðrún alone.
- 41 By implication, icy.
- 42 The last line of this stanza appears corrupt. It is probably missing an initial word beginning with *b-* (perhaps *bungar* 'heavy', whence 'May heavy sorrows ...').
- 43 Literally, 'grief-series', 'grief-enumeration'.
- 44 This stanza may be spoken either by Guðrún or by the poet in his or her own voice; cf. the last line of *Od.* 34.

Hamðismál

Hamðismál (*Hm.*) ‘The Lay of Hamðir’, more fully *Hamðismál in formu* ‘The Ancient Lay of Hamðir’, survives on fol. 44v–45v of R and brings its collection of Eddic poetry to a fierce and memorable conclusion. It is arguably the codex’s finest heroic poem, and likely to be among its oldest. Possible echoes in skaldic verses by Torf-Einarr Røgnvaldsson, a jarl of the Orkneys in the early tenth century, may point to the existence of a version of *Hm.* by then.¹ That key aspects of a form of the story told in *Hm.* were known in ninth-century Norway is shown by stt. 3–6 of *Ragnarsdrápa* ‘Ragnarr’s Poem’, a skaldic composition attributed to Bragi Boddason, a poet thought to have been active in Norway c. 850–70. These four stanzas, quoted in *SnESkáld* (I, 42, pp. 50–51), describe scenes on a shield belonging to Ragnarr loðbrók which depicted the attack of Guðrún’s sons, Hamðir and Sǫrli, on the Gothic King Jormunrekkr and their subsequent stoning.² At least one aspect of the story treated in *Hm.* has much earlier roots than that, however. For the vengeance exacted by Hamðir and Sǫrli on Jormunrekkr for the killing of their sister, Svanhildr, is also attested, albeit in different circumstances and different form, in the mid-sixth-century *Getica* of Jordanes.³

Postdating *Hm.* are other Northern versions of the story, which attest to its popularity. Thirteenth-century Old Norse prose accounts survive in *SnESkáld* (I, 42) and chapters 42–44 of VS, the latter account being partly based on a version of *Hm.*, from which it quotes the first half of st. 28. Earlier, in the twelfth century, the story was told in Saxo Grammaticus’ *GD* (8.10.10–14), in which the Goths have become Danes and the avenging brothers Hellestontines. There are also German accounts, including references in the Latin *Annales Quedlinburgenses* ‘Annals of Quedlinburg’ and *Chronicon Wirzburgense* ‘Chronicle of Würzburg’ from around the year 1000, and a sixteenth-century Low German ballad called *Koninc Ermenerikes Dot* ‘King Ermenerik’s Death’.⁴

1 See U. Dronke, ed. and trans., *The Poetic Edda: Volume I. Heroic Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 214–17. For an edition and translation of Torf-Einarr’s verses, see SPSMA I, 129–38.

2 See also SPSMA III, 31–38.

3 See the introduction to *Ghv*.

4 For detailed discussion of relevant Norse and German texts, and their interrelationships, see C. Brady, *The Legends of Ermanaric* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1943); G. Zink, *Les légendes héroïques de Dietrich et d’Ermrich dans les littératures germaniques* (Lyon: IAC, 1950); Dronke, *Poetic Edda: Volume I*, pp. 192–224; von See et al., *Kommentar*, Bd. 7.

Hm. is composed almost entirely in *fornyrðislag*. The only exception is a single stanza of *ljóðaháttir* (29), which need not necessarily therefore be an interpolation. Some early scholars raised serious doubts about the poem's integrity and considered it something of a noble ruin, but others (probably more enlightened) subsequently discern a largely complete and finely crafted poem by a poet of rare skill—which does not, of course, necessarily mean that he may not have drawn on diverse sources. Although it is likely that st. 12 has been displaced from its original position after st. 14, and although st. 22 appears partly corrupt, *Hm.* is mostly comprehensible as it stands and appears to require no major textual surgery.

That is not, however, to say that *Hm.* is easy to appreciate in all respects, especially as it is not always wholly clear who is speaking (*R'*s attribution of st. 26 to Hamðir may well be mistaken). The poem's many vivid and often violent images—of, for example, Svanhildr being trampled by horses, Guðrún standing as a stripped, isolated tree, a man hanging from a gallows as a likely sacrifice to Óðinn, Jórmunrekkr's severed limbs burning in a fire, and Hamðir and Sqrli surmounting corpses like eagles on a bough—make immediate and lasting impressions. But full appreciation of *Hm.*'s terse, confrontational and often sententious dialogue requires careful consideration, not just of what the characters say explicitly but also of what they do not state but may communicate implicitly.⁵

At its heart, *Hm.* is a tale of human tragedy both self-inflicted by human failings and predestined, being played out against a supernatural backdrop of weeping elves, a delighting ogress, inciting female spirits and the fatal decree of the Nornir. If Hamðir and Sqrli, as 'brothers of the same mother' (24), had not acted angrily on their prejudice against their half-brother Erpr, 'the man of a separate mother' (14) whom they called a 'bastard' (12), they would have escaped Jórmunrekkr's hall with their lives, because the king would have been unable to command their stoning. Hamðir comes to recognize this: 'Off would be the head [of Jórmunrekkr] now, if Erpr [still] lived, the battle-brave brother of us both' (28). Yet, although Hamðir and Sqrli had a choice, it seems they were fated to make the wrong one (or at least believed this was the case); in other words, they both had options and had none, their fate was at once in their hands and out of it. It is fitting that this haunting paradox which lies at the heart of much Northern myth and legend should find such telling expression in *R'*s climactic poem, which marks the extinction of Guðrún's line.

5 See T. A. Shippey, 'Speech and the Unspoken in *Hamðismál*', in M. J. Toswell, ed., *Prosody and Poetics in the Early Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of C. B. Hieatt* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 180–96.

Synopsis

An introductory stanza sets the scene by referring to the burgeoning of grim deeds, the weeping of elves, and the pain that all men's afflictions cause in the early morning (1). It was long ago, the poet says, that Guðrún incited her sons, Hamðir and Sǫrli, to avenge their sister, Svanhildr (2). She reminds them how Svanhildr was trampled to death by Jörmunrekkr's horses (3), and declares that they are the last of her line (4) and that she stands alone, bereft (5). Hamðir reminds her that it was her dead brothers, Högni and Gunnarr, who slew her beloved Sigurðr (6–7), whereupon she undertook to kill her sons by Atli, thereby bringing grief upon herself (8). Sǫrli says that he has no wish to argue with his mother, but that the revenge she is asking them to take will cause her further grief, as he and his brother will die (9–10). The brothers set off to avenge Svanhildr (11) and met their half-brother, Erpr, whom they insulted and killed after failing to appreciate the wisdom in his enigmatic statement that he would help them as one foot helps another (12–15). They then dressed themselves finely (16) and encountered Svanhildr's stepson and reputed lover (Randvér), who was hanging wounded on a gallows (17).

The scene shifts to Jörmunrekkr's hall, whose rowdy occupants are alerted to the arrival of the brothers and warned to devise a plan, as they are about to face mighty warriors intent on avenging the dead maiden (18–19). Jörmunrekkr laughed at this and declares himself delighted at the prospect of capturing and hanging Hamðir and Sǫrli (20–21). What happens next is unclear, due to textual corruption, but a woman (perhaps Óðinn incognito) possibly expresses incredulity that the two brothers alone could defeat two hundred enemies (22). Battle is joined and Hamðir taunts Jörmunrekkr, whose arms and legs the brothers have severed and thrown in the fire (23–24). Jörmunrekkr (perhaps inspired by Óðinn) roars at his men to stone the brothers, since iron weapons cannot hurt them (25), whereupon (according to the likely original form of the text) Sǫrli castigates Hamðir for loosening the 'bag' (that is, prompting what is left of Jörmunrekkr to speak) (26–27). Hamðir (apparently) then regrets the killing of Erpr, whom he now recognizes as their brother, with whose help they would have beheaded Jörmunrekkr and thereby prevented him from ordering their stoning (28). Sǫrli (possibly) says that the two of them won't fight with each other like wolves (29). Hamðir (possibly) then proclaims that they have fought well, won glory—and that no man outlives the time at which the Nornir determine he will die (30). A final stanza records where Sǫrli and Hamðir fell (31).

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Hamðismál

1. Spruttu á tái tregnar íðir,
groeti álfa in glýstömu;
ár um morgin manna bólva
sútir hverjar sorg um kveykva!
2. Vara þat nú, né í gær,
þat hefir langt liðit síðan —
er fátt fornara, fremr var þat hálfu —
er hvatti Guðrún, Gjúka borin,
sonu sína unga at hefna Svanhildar.
3. 'Systir var ykkur Svanhildr um heitin,
sú er Jórmunrekkr jóm um traddi,
hvítum ok svörtum, á hervegi,
grám, gangtönum Gotna hrossum.
4. 'Eptir er ykkr þrungit, þjóðkonunga —
lifið einir ér þátta ættar minnar!
5. 'Einstoeð em ek orðin sem զsp í holti,
fallin at frændum sem fura at kvisti,
vaðin at vilja sem viðr at laufi,
þá er in kvistskœða kømr um dag varman!'
6. Hitt kvað þá Hamðir inn hugumstóri:
'Lítt myndir þú þá, Guðrún, leyfa dáð Högna,
er þeir Sigurð svefní ór vökðu —
saztu á beð, en banar hlógu!
7. 'Bœkr váru þínar, inar bláhvítu,
ofnar völundum, flutu í vers dreyra;
svalt þá Sigurðr, saztu yfir dauðum,
glyja þú né gáðir — Gunnarr þér svá vildi!
8. 'Atla þöttisk þú stríða at Erps morði
ok at Eitils aldrlagi — þat var þér enn verra!
Svá skyldi hverr զðrum verja til aldrлага,
sverði sárbeitu, at sér né stríddit!'
9. Hitt kvað þá Sørli — svinna hafði hann hyggju:
'Vilkat ek við móður málum skipta,
orðs þíkkir enn vant ykkru hváru:
hvers biðr þú nú, Guðrún, er þú at gráti né færat?

The Lay of Hamðir

1. There sprouted on the threshold¹ sorrowful deeds,
the glee-stemmed² grievings of elves;³
early in the morning any afflictions
of the evils of men engender sorrow!
2. It wasn't [just] now, nor yesterday,
it has long since passed —
few things are older, it was further away by half —
when Guðrún, born of Gjúki, incited
her young sons to avenge Svanhildr.
3. 'Your⁴ sister was called Svanhildr,
she whom Jörmunrekkr trampled with steeds,
white and black, on the army-way,⁵
with the grey, gait-tamed horses of the Gotar.⁶
4. 'You're crushed back, people-kings —
you alone [still] live of the strands of my family!
5. 'I've become lone-standing like an aspen in a wood,
bereft of kinsmen like a fir of branches,
stripped of my desire⁷ like a tree⁸ of leaf,
when the branch-damaging one⁹ comes on a warm day!'
6. Then Hamðir the great-hearted said this:
'Little would you, Guðrún, have lauded Högni's deed then,
when they woke Sigurðr from sleep —
you sat on the bed, and the slayers laughed!¹⁰
7. 'Your embroidered coverlets, the blue-white ones,¹¹
woven by skilled craftsmen, floated in your husband's gore;¹²
Sigurðr died then, you sat over the dead man,
you didn't pay heed to gaiety¹³ — Gunnarr willed it so for you!'
8. 'You thought to harm Atli through Erpr's murder
and Eitill's life-end¹⁴ — that was even worse for you!
Everyone should bring another to life-end,
with a wound-biting¹⁵ sword, in such a way that one didn't harm oneself!'
9. Then Sörli said this — he had a shrewd mind:
'I don't want to bandy words with my mother,
[though] it seems to each of you two that there's still a lack of talk:
what do you ask for now, Guðrún, that won't bring you to weeping?'

10. 'Brœðr grát þú þína ok buri svása,
niðja náborna, leidda nær rógi!
Okkr skaltu ok, Guðrún, gráta báða,
er hér sitjum feigir á mɔrum — fjarri munum deyja!'
11. Gengu ór garði, górvir at eiskra;
liðu þá yfir, ungar, úrig fjoll,
mɔrum húnleneskum, morðs at hefna.
- 12 [14]. Þá kvað þat Erpr einu sinni —
mærr, um lék á mars baki:
'Illt er blauðum hal brautir kenna!'
Kóðu harðan mjók hornung vera!
- 13 [12]. Fundu á stræti stórbrögðóttan:
'Hvé mun jarpskammr okkr fultingja?'
- 14 [13]. Svaraði inn sundrmoeðri, svá kvazk veita mundu
fulting frændum sem fótr qðrum.
'Hvat megi fótr fæti veita,
né holdgróin hónd annarri?'
15. Drógu þeir ór skíði skíðijárn,
mækis eggjar, at mun flagði;
þverðu þeir þrótt sinn at þriðjungi,
létu móg ungan til moldar hníga.
16. Skóku loða, skálmir festu,
ok goðbornir smugu í guðvef.
17. Fram lágu brautir, fundu vástígu
ok systur son sáran á meiði,
vargtré vindkold vestan bœjar;
trýtti æ trönu hvot — tift varat biða!
18. Glaumr var í höllu, halir qlreifir,
ok til gota ekki gerðut heyra,
áðr halr hugfullr í horn um þaut.
19. Segja fóru Jórmunrekki
at sénir váru seggir und hjálnum:
'Rœðið ér um ráð! Ríkir eru komnir —
fyr mátkum hafið ér mɔnnum mey um tradda!'

10. 'Weep for your brothers and your sweet boys,
your near-born kindred, led near to strife!
You, Guðrún, shall also grieve for us both,
as we sit here doomed on our horses — we shall die far away!'
11. They went from the court, ready to roar;
they passed then, the young ones, over moist mountains,¹⁶
on Húnlandic¹⁷ horses, to avenge murder.
- 12 [14].¹⁸ Then Erpr¹⁹ said this, one time —
splendid, he sported on his horse's back:
'It's [a] bad [idea] to show a soft²⁰ man the way!'²¹
They²² declared him to be a very hard bastard!²³
- 13 [12]. They²⁴ encountered on the street one with great strategies:²⁵
'How will a short, reddish-brown²⁶ one help us two?'²⁷
- 14 [13]. The man of a separate mother²⁸ answered — he said thus,
that he would grant
help to his kinsmen as [one] foot²⁹ to the other.³⁰
'How can a foot give help to a foot,
or one flesh-grown hand³¹ [give help to] the other?'³²
15. They drew from the scabbard sheath-iron,³³
the sword's edges, to the delight of an ogress,³⁴
they diminished their might by a third,
made the young man³⁵ sink to the soil.³⁶
16. They shook their loden cloaks, fastened their short-swords,
and the god-descended ones³⁷ dressed themselves in costly cloth.
17. Ahead lay the ways, they found woe-paths
and their sister's son³⁸ wounded on a cross-beam,³⁹
wind-cold wolf⁴⁰-trees⁴¹ west of the farmstead;
the crane's incitement⁴² swung endlessly — it wasn't pleasant to abide!
18. There was revelry in the hall,⁴³ ale-merry men,
and they couldn't hear the Gothic horses,⁴⁴
until a brave man blew into a horn.
19. They⁴⁵ went to tell Jórmunrekkr⁴⁶
that men in⁴⁷ helmets had been seen:
'Take counsel about a plan! Powerful ones have come here —
in defiance of mighty men you⁴⁸ have trampled a maiden to death!'

20. Hló þá Jörmunrekkr, hendi drap á kampa,
beiddisk at brøngu, bøðvaðisk at víni;
skók hann skør jarpa, sá á skjold hvítan,
lét hann sér í hendi hvarfa ker gullit.
21. 'Sæll ek þá þöttumk, ef ek sjá knætta
Hamði ok Sørla í høllu minni;
buri mynda ek þá binda með boga strengjum,
goðbørn Gjúka, festa á gálga!'
22. Hitt kvað þá Hróðrgloð, stóð uf hléðum,
mæfingr mælti við móg þenna:
'... þvíat þat heita, at hlýðigi myni —
mæga tveir menn einir tíu hundruð Gotna
binda eða berja í borg inni há?'
23. Styrr varð í ranni, stukku qlskálar,
í blóði bragnar lágu komit ór brjósti Gotna.
24. Hitt kvað þá Hamðir inn hugumstóri:
'Æstir, Jörmunrekkr, okkarrar kvámu,
brœðra sammœðra, innan borgar þinna;
fœtr sér þú þína, hondum sér þú þínunum,
Jörmunrekkr, orpit í eld heitan!'
25. Þá hraut við inn reginkunngi,
baldr í brynu, sem björn hryti:
'Grýtið er á gumna, allz geirar né bíta,
eggjar né járn, Jónakrs sonu!'
26. Hitt kvað þá Hamðir inn hugumstóri:
'Bøl vanntu, bróðir, er þú þann belg leystir —
opt ór þeim belg bøll ráð koma!'
27. 'Hug hefðir þú, Hamðir, ef þú hefðir hyggjandi;
mikils er á mann hvern vант, er manvits er!'
28. 'Af væri nú haufuð, ef Erpr lifði,
bróðir okkarr inn bøðfrækni, er vit á braut vágum,
verr inn viðfrækni — hvøttumk at dísir —
gumi inn gunnhelgi — gørðumk at vígi!'
29. 'Ekki hygg ek okkr vera úlfa dœmi,
at vit mynim sjálfir um sakask,
sem grey Norna, þau er, gráðug, eru
í auðn um alin!'

20. Then Jormunrekkr laughed, stroked his moustache with his hand,
worked himself up for battle, grew warlike at his wine;
he shook his reddish-brown hair, regarded his white shield,
he made the golden goblet turn in his hand.
21. 'I should think myself blessed, then, if I could see
Hamðir and Sørli in my hall;
I would then bind the boys with bows' strings,
the god-born⁴⁹ of Gjúki, fasten them to gallows!'⁵⁰
22. Then Hróðrglóð(?)⁵¹ said this — she stood by the doors⁵² —
slender-fingered, she spoke to this young man:⁵³
'... (?) because they promise it, that would not be obedience(?)⁵⁴ —
can two men alone bind or beat [down]
two hundred Gotar in the high stronghold?'
23. There was uproar in the house, ale-cups flew about,
men lay in blood come from the breast⁵⁵ of the Gotar.
24. Then Hamðir the great-hearted said this:
'You wished, Jormunrekkr, for our coming,
brothers of the same mother,⁵⁶ within your stronghold;
you see your feet,⁵⁷ you see your hands,⁵⁸
Jormunrekkr, hurled into the hot fire!'⁵⁹
25. Then the one descended from ruling powers⁶⁰ roared at that,⁶¹
bold in his mail-coat, as a bear roars:
'Stone the men, since spears don't bite,
[or] edges⁶² or iron,⁶³ Jónakr's sons!'⁶⁴
26. Then Hamðir(?) the great-hearted said this:⁶⁵
'You did badly, brother, when you loosened that bag⁶⁶ —
bold counsels often come from that bag!'⁶⁷
27. 'You'd have had [some] heart,⁶⁸ Hamðir, if you'd had insight;
every man lacks much when innate intelligence is wanting!'
- 28.⁶⁹ 'Off would be the head⁷⁰ now, if Erpr [still] lived,⁷¹
the battle-brave brother of us both, whom we slew on the way,
the widely brave man⁷² — supernatural women⁷³ spurred me —⁷⁴
the combat-holy man⁷⁵ — to the killing!'
- 29.⁷⁶ 'I don't think wolves are an example to us two,
that we shall ourselves fight each other,
like the bitches of the Nornir,⁷⁷ those which, greedy, are
nourished in the wilderness!'

30. 'Vel høfum vit vegit! Stóndum á val Gotna,
ofan eggmóðum, sem ernir á kvisti!
Góðs høfum tírar fengit, þótt skylim nú eða í gær deyja —
kveld lífir maðr ekki eptir kvið Nornal'
31. Þar fell Sørli at salar gaflí,
en Hamðir hné at húsbaki.

Þetta eru kólluð 'Hamðismál in fornu.'

30.⁷⁸ 'Well have we two slain! We stand on the Gotar's slaughtered,
 above edge-weary ones,⁷⁹ like eagles on a branch!
We've seized good glory, even if we shall die now or another day⁸⁰ —
 no one lives the evening after the Nornir's decree!'⁸¹

31. There fell Sǫrli at the hall's gable,
 and Hamðir sank at the back of the house.⁸²

This is called *Hamðismál in fornu* ['The Ancient Lay of Hamðir'].

Textual Apparatus to *Hamðismál*

Hamðismál] The rubricated title is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this reading is therefore reliant on the transcription therein

1/1 *Spruttu]* The first letter is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of R; this reading is therefore taken from the transcription therein

10/4 *leidda]* R *leiþa*

17/8 *biða]* R *biðia*

20/1 *Jormunrekkr]* R *ior / mvnr* with the rest of the word obliterated

22/8 *hundruð]* R *hvndropom*

28/5 *verr]* R *vaR*

28/8 *gørðumk]* R *gorþvmz*

29/1 *okkr]* R *ycr*

Notes to the Translation

1 Cf. *Ghv.* 9.

2 I.e., joyless.

3 Probably benevolent ancestral spirits or other supernatural beings affiliated to a human family.

4 Guðrún uses the dual pronoun to address Hamðir and Sǫrli together.

5 Or ‘common highway’.

6 Goths. Cf. *Ghv.* 2.

7 Or ‘of joy’.

8 Or ‘wood’.

9 Probably a woman gathering wood. Otherwise, perhaps a gale, a fire, an axe or a hind.

10 Cf. *Ghv.* 4.

11 I.e., ones with blue and white stripes.

12 Cf. *Ghv.* 4.

13 I.e., Guðrún was distraught.

14 I.e., death. Erpr and Eitill were Guðrún’s sons by Atli. The former is distinct from the Erpr whom Hamðir and Sǫrli meet later in this poem.

15 Or ‘painfully biting’.

16 Cf. *FSk.* 10.

17 This may simply mean ‘southern’.

18 This stanza is presumably either an original stanza that has been misplaced—it would fit more comfortably after *Hm.* 14—or an awkward accretion.

19 He is, of course, distinct from Atli’s son Erpr, whom Guðrún killed.

20 I.e., spineless, cowardly; cf. *harðan* ‘hard’ in the next line. It is unclear whether Erpr knows that, unlike him, Hamðir and Sǫrli were hard in the sense that they could not be pierced by iron weapons (see *Hm.* 25).

- 21 Literally, 'ways'. Another proverbial statement, one that prompts the decidedly uncowardly Hamðir and Sǫrli to kill their half-brother.
- 22 Hamðir and Sǫrli.
- 23 Whether Erpr was indeed of illegitimate birth is uncertain.
- 24 Hamðir and Sǫrli.
- 25 Or 'planning great deeds'. The reference is to Erpr.
- 26 Here *jarp-* 'reddish-brown' puns on *Erpr*.
- 27 This question is asked by Sǫrli or Hamðir, or by both together. A prior offer of help by Erpr may be inferred.
- 28 Erpr, whose mother's name is unknown. Cf. *Hm.* 24 where Hamðir describes himself and Sǫrli as 'brothers of the same mother'; also the prose preceding *Ghv.*, where, by contrast, Erpr is Guðrún's son.
- 29 Or 'leg'.
- 30 Proverbial.
- 31 I.e., hand (or arm) of the same flesh.
- 32 This foolish, impatient question is asked by either Sǫrli or, much more likely, Hamðir (or by both together). It possibly cuts Erpr's proverbial utterance short.
- 33 I.e., the sword.
- 34 Perhaps one of the *dísir* (cf. *Hm.* 28, *Rm.* 24); less likely, the goddess Hel.
- 35 Erpr.
- 36 In VS 44, Hamðir and Sǫrli kill Erpr because they misinterpret his cryptic words as indicating that he would not help them; in *SnESkáld* (I, 42, p. 50), their motivation is to hurt Guðrún, who loved Erpr most. In VS 44, following the killing of Erpr, the usefulness of hand to foot, and of foot to foot, is demonstrated when Hamðir trips and has to use one hand to steady himself, and when Sǫrli stumbles and has to use both feet to regain his balance; in *SnESkáld* (I, 42, p. 50), Sǫrli stumbles and supports one leg with one arm.
- 37 Sǫrli and Hamðir.
- 38 Randvér, Svanhildr's stepson and reputed lover; see the prose preceding *Ghv.*
- 39 I.e., of a gallows; alternatively, 'tree'. The combination of wounding and hanging may indicate a sacrifice to Óðinn. Cf. *Hm.* 21.
- 40 Or 'criminal'.
- 41 Gallows.
- 42 Randvér's corpse, which, as carrion, would attract birds. The crane (*trana*) is not a carrion-bird, but here presumably stands in for such.
- 43 Jormunrekkr's hall.
- 44 Gothic horses were greatly prized; here they are presumably ridden by Hamðir and Sǫrli. Alternatively, *Gota* 'Goths', presumably Hamðir and Sǫrli.
- 45 Jormunrekkr's sentries or other retainers.
- 46 The Old Norse line lacks alliteration, which may well indicate textual corruption.
- 47 Literally, 'under'.
- 48 Pl.
- 49 I.e., children descended from gods. Alternatively, *góð børn* 'good children'.

- 50 Possibly as sacrifices to Óðinn; cf. *Hm.* 17. The Old Norse line's alliteration is faulty, or at least unusual; the second half should perhaps be *á galga festa*, with the same meaning.
- 51 'Glory Glad', usually interpreted as a woman's name. Its bearer is possibly Óðinn in female form. Alternatively, it may just be an adjective describing an unnamed female observer.
- 52 Specifically, the door(s) to a sleeping chamber along the side of the hall.
- 53 The identity of the young man is unclear.
- 54 This line resists interpretation and may well be corrupt. Some text might have dropped out before it, though there is no indication of loss in **R**.
- 55 Or 'chest'. Unless this refers to Jórmunrekkr alone, presumably more than one man's chest may be inferred.
- 56 This refers solely to Hamðir and Sǫrli.
- 57 Or 'legs'.
- 58 Or 'arms'. The Old Norse line has unconventional alliteration.
- 59 The brothers have dismembered Jórmunrekkr.
- 60 Probably Jórmunrekkr, the ruling powers being gods. Alternatively, 'the one with divine/powerful insight', which, although still describing Jórmunrekkr, might suggest a link with Óðinn in particular. In VS 44, Óðinn advises Jórmunrekkr to stone the brothers; he intervenes similarly in *GD* (8.10.14).
- 61 This line lacks conventional alliteration.
- 62 Sword-edges.
- 63 Or 'iron weapons'.
- 64 VS 44 (cf. *SnEskáld* I, 42, p. 49) indicates that Guðrún had made Hamðir and Sǫrli's armour invulnerable to iron, but *Hm.* makes no mention of this.
- 65 Either the attribution of these words to Hamðir is mistaken or Sǫrli spoke the second half of *Hm.* 24. It seems more likely that the following words were originally spoken by the shrewd Sǫrli, and that the half-stanzas *Hm.* 26 and 27 were originally a single full stanza spoken by him.
- 66 The 'bag' is Jórmunrekkr's head and torso.
- 67 This line might be corrupt. Perhaps it originally read *opt ór rauðum belg bøll ráð koma* 'bold counsels often come from a red [i.e., bloody] bag'.
- 68 Or 'mind', 'spirit'.
- 69 It is not entirely clear who speaks *Hm.* 28–30. However, VS 44 quotes a close variant of the first half of this stanza, and both the saga and *SnEskáld* (I, 42, p. 50) attribute words corresponding to this stanza to Hamðir.
- 70 Jórmunrekkr's head.
- 71 *SnEskáld* (I, 42, p. 49) says that Guðrún had instructed Hamðir and Sǫrli to cut off Jórmunrekkr's arms and legs, and Erpr his head.
- 72 If the rather awkward manuscript reading *varr* (= *várr* 'our') is kept, the sense is 'the widely brave one of ours'.
- 73 Cf. *Hm.* 15.
- 74 This line lacks conventional alliteration in the Old Norse.
- 75 Erpr again.

- 76 This is the only stanza of *ljóðaháttir* in *Hm*.
- 77 Supernatural females who determined humans' fates. Their 'bitches' are presumably wolves.
- 78 This edition assigns this stanza to Hamðir, but it might alternatively be spoken by Sǫrli or perhaps by both brothers together.
- 79 Goths slain by weapons. Cf. *Grm*. 53.
- 80 Or perhaps 'or tomorrow'.
- 81 Cf. *Fm*. 11.
- 82 This may indicate that the brothers fought their way separately outside the hall, where stones would presumably be more plentiful.

POEMS FROM OTHER MANUSCRIPTS

Völuspá (*Hauksbók*)

The fourteenth-century manuscript *Hauksbók* (**H**)—AM 544 4^{to}—contains, on fol. 20r–21r, a version of *Völuspá* ‘The Prophecy of the Seeress’ (*Vsp.*) which differs substantially from that of the Codex Regius (**R**). The relationship between these versions, and another from which *SnEGylf* quotes, has not been precisely determined, but their differences probably result from a combination of oral diffusion (which may have involved some recomposition), interpolation, scribal error and other transmissional damage. They are extensive enough to warrant presentation of **H**’s text separately from **R**’s. They prompt reflection on the uncertainties surrounding the composition, transmission and preservation of Eddic poems in general, of the roles of poets, scribes and chance as creators of myths, and of the variation of Norse mythological ideas from person to person and place to place, both synchronically and diachronically.

H’s text is distinguished from **R**’s most strikingly by the omission of any explicit description of the killing of the god Baldr and by apparent narrative disjunctions that make the poem harder to follow. If **H**’s text is less comprehensible and on the whole less satisfying than **R**’s, it does, however, include passages of great interest that are absent from **R**. These include a compellingly ghastly image of the world-serpent gaping across the sky like an apocalyptic return of the primeval void (**H** 47), and, in a penultimate half-stanza (**H** 57), a reference to the arrival of a ‘commanding one’, who rules all, to ‘divine judgement(?)’, which raises questions about the nature and extent of Christian influence on the poem.

For further introductory remarks on *Vsp.*, see the introduction to the **R** text.

Synopsis

A seeress requests an audience from ‘all holy kindreds’, and asks whether a certain person (unnamed) wants her to recount her earliest memories (**H** 1). She tells of giants who fostered her, nine worlds, a glorious tree (*Yggdrasill*) beneath the ground (2), and Ymir, a giant who lived when there was otherwise only a void (3). She recalls how the sons of Borr (Óðinn, Vili and Vé) raised up earth (4), and mentions the young sun, stars and moon, before they had established their places (5).

The gods, she says, then named night and day (6). They made treasures and tools (7). They happily played board games and knew no want of gold, until three giantesses arrived (8). Then the gods assembled to decide about the creation of dwarves (9). There follow lists of dwarf-names, headed by Móðsognir and Durinn (at least some of this material is probably interpolated) (10–16).

The seeress then recalls the discovery on the shore of the inanimate forms of Askr and Embla, the first man and woman (17), which three gods, Óðinn, Hœnir and Lóðurr, animated (18). Her memories then return to Yggdrasill, now standing tall above a spring (19), from which came three maidens (the Nornir) who inscribed the fates of people on wood (20).

Next the seeress records how the gods discussed who had polluted the air (metaphorically) and promised Freyja to the giants (21). Þórr breaks oaths, probably by killing a giant builder to whom the gods had promised Freyja as payment for his work (22).

The seeress's thoughts turn to the god Heimdallr, whose hearing is hidden beneath Yggdrasill, and to Óðinn's sacrifice of an eye in return for wisdom (23). She then describes the birth of wolves to 'the old one' in the forest of Járniðr and prophesies that one of them, in troll-form, will (arguably) assault the sun on behalf of the moon (24), perhaps as a result of which subsequent summers become dark and all weather treacherous (25).

Next the seeress, who apparently refers to herself in the third person, recalls the world's first war. It may have been caused when an itinerant sorceress called Gullveig (also known as Heiðr), possibly associated with the divine tribe called the Vanir, was suspended on spearpoints and burnt three times in the hall of Hárr (Óðinn), in an unsuccessful attempt to kill her (26–27). Having debated the best course of action (28), the Æsir (the tribe of gods led by Óðinn) fought the Vanir, with Óðinn casting the first shot, but the Vanir broke into the Æsir's stronghold (29).

After an obscure reference to intestinal fetters (and without mentioning Baldr's murder by Höðr at the instigation of Loki), the seeress pictures Sigyn sitting beside her husband, the presumably captive Loki (30), this being the first of multiple intimations of Ragnarok.

Garmr (a dog or wolf), she says, howls loudly—in the first of several such mentions—before prophesying that the howling wolf (Garmr/Fenrir) will break free of its bonds (31). Next she describes the giant Eggþér playing his harp, cockerels crowing and the waking of Óðinn's chosen warriors (32–33). She also mentions an ominous hall of snakes, where perjurors and adulterers suffered, where the dragon Niðhoggr sucked corpses and a wolf tore men's flesh (34–35).

Another reference to Garmr's howling and the seeress's own powers of prophecy (36) precedes a prediction that kinsmen will kill each other before the world ends (37). The seeress goes on to say that the giants play, the god Heimdallr blows his horn, and Óðinn consults the head of Mímr in search of knowledge (38). Yggdrasill groans

and shakes, and the giant (Garmr/Fenrir or Loki) breaks loose (39). The gods take council, the land of giants roars, and dwarves groan (40).

Garmr howls again (41). The giant Hrymr journeys from the east, the snake of Miðgarðr writhes, an eagle shrieks, and Naglfar (a ship?) breaks loose (42). A ship (Naglfar?) journeys from the east, bearing the giants, Loki and the wolf (43). The fire-demon Surtr arrives, probably with a radiant, fiery sword, cliffs collapse, witches fall down, people travel to Hel, the underworld of the dead, and the sky splits (44). Óðinn dies fighting the wolf, and Freyr dies fighting Surtr (45).

Garmr howls once more (46), the world-encircling snake gapes across the sky and Þórr will go to meet it (47). Þórr (mortally wounded?) steps away from the snake (48). The sun turns black, the earth sinks into the sea, the stars disappear, and flame rages against the sky (49).

For a final time, Garmr howls and the seeress looks further ahead (50).

She sees the green earth rising from the sea again (51). The surviving gods talk about the world-serpent and Óðinn's runic wisdom (52). They will recover their lost gaming pieces (53), fields will grow green without being sown, all evil will be remedied, and Hóðr and Baldr will return from the dead to inhabit Óðinn's halls (54). Hoenir can then draw lots, and the sons of two brothers (probably Hóðr and Baldr) inhabit the world (55). She also sees a gleaming hall, located on Gimlé, where honourable people shall live happily forever (56).

She records that a 'commanding one', who rules all, will come to 'divine judgement(?)' (57). Her final image is of the flying dragon Niðhoggr carrying corpses, after which she says she will sink (58).

Further Reading

See the works listed in the Further Reading section for the R text, especially E. Mundal's 'Oral or Scribal Variation in *Völuspá*: A Case Study in Old Norse Poetry' and G. Steinsland's 'The Fantastic Future and the Norse Sibyl of *Völuspá*'.

Völuspá

1. ‘Hljóðs bið ek allar helgar kindir,
meiri ok minni, mogu Heimdallar!
Viltu at ek, Válföðrs, vel fram telja,
forn spjöll fira, þau er ek fremst um man?’
2. ‘Ek man jöttna, ár um borna,
þá er forðum mik fædda hófðu;
níu man ek heima, níu íviðjur,
mjötvið mæran, fyr mold neðan.’
3. ‘Ár var alda, þar er Ymir bygði;
vara sandr né sjór né svalar unnir;
jörð fannsk æva né upphiminn,
gap var ginnunga, en gras ekki.’
4. ‘Áðr Bors synir bjöðum of ypðu,
þeir er mæran Miðgarð skópu;
Sól skein sunnan á salar steina,
þá var grund gróin grœnum lauki.’
5. ‘Sól varp sunnan, sinni Mána,
hendi inni hœgri of *himinjöður*;
Sól þat né vissi hvar hon sali átti,
stjórnur þat né vissu hvar þær staði áttu,
Máni þat né vissi hvat hann megins átti.’
6. ‘Þá gengu regin qll á rökstóla,
ginneilög goð, ok um þat gættusk:
nótt ok niðjum nöfn um gáfu,
morgin hétu ok miðjan dag,
undorn ok aptan, árum at telja.’
7. ‘Hittusk Æsir á Iðavelli,
afls kostuðu, alls freistuðu;
afla logðu, auð smíðuðu,
tangir skópu ok tól gørðu.’
8. ‘Teflðu í túni, teitir váru,
var þeim vættugis vant ór gulli,
unz þrjár kómu þussa meyjar,
ámátkar mjók, ór Jötunheimum.’

The Prophecy of the Seeress

- 1.¹
‘A hearing I ask from all holy kindreds,²
greater and lesser, the sons of Heimdallr!
Do you wish(?)³ that I well recount Váföðr’s
ancient tales of the living, those which I recall from longest ago?⁴
2.
‘I recall giants, born of old,
those who formerly had fostered me;
nine worlds I recall, nine wood-dwelling women(?),
the glorious measure-tree, beneath the ground.
3.
‘It was early in ages when Ymir lived;
there was neither sand nor sea nor cool waves;
no earth existed at all, nor sky up above,
a gap of gaping abysses(?), and no grass at all.
4.
‘Before the sons of Borr⁵ lifted up lands,
they who gave shape to glorious Miðgarðr;
the sun shone from the south on the hall’s stones,
then the ground was overgrown with green leek.
5.
‘Sól, companion of Máni, cast from the south
her right hand over the sky-rim;⁶
Sól did not know where she had halls,
stars did not know where they had stations;
Máni did not know what might he had.
6.
‘Then all the great powers, the most holy gods,
went to their doom-seats and deliberated about it:
they gave names to night and its kindred,
called them morning and midday,
afternoon and evening, to count the years.
7.
‘The Æsir met on Iðavöllr,
they tested their strength, tried everything;⁷
they set up forges, fashioned treasure,
shaped tongs and made tools.
8.
‘They played at tables in the meadow, were merry,
there was for them no whit of a want of gold;
until three maidens of giants⁸ came,
immensely mighty, from Jötunheimar.

9. ‘Þá gengu regin oll á rökstóla,
ginnheilög goð, ok um þat gættusk,
hverir skyldu dvergar dröttir skepja
ór brimi blóðgu ok ór Bláins leggjum.
10. ‘Þar var Móðsognir mæztr of orðinn
dverga allra, en Durinn annarr;
þeir manlíkun mórg of gørðu,
dverga, í jorðu, sem Durinn sagði.
11. ‘Nýi, Niði, Norðri, Suðri,
Austri, Vestri, Alþjófr, Dvalinn,
Nár ok Náinn, Nípingr, Dáinn,
Veggr, Gandálfr, Vindálfr, Þorinn,
12. ‘Bífurr, Báfurr, Bómburr, Nóri,
Án ok Ónarr, Ái, Mjöðvitnir,
Þrár ok Þráinn, Þrór, Litr ok Vitr,
Nýr ok Nýráðr — nú hefi ek rekka
— Reginn ok Ráðsviðr — rétt um talða.
13. ‘Fíli, Kíli, Fundinn, Náli,
Hefti, Fíli, Hánarr ok Sviðr,
Nár ok Náinn, Nípingr, Dáinn,
Billingr, Brúni, Bíldr ok Búri,
Frór, Fornbogi, Fræg ok Lóni,
Aurvangr, Jari, Eikinskjaldi.
14. ‘Mál er dverga í Dvalins liði
ljóna kindum til Lofars telja,
þeim er sóttu frá Salarsteini
Aurvanga sjöt til Jørvalla.
15. ‘Þar var Draufnir ok Dólgbrasir,
Hár, Haugspori, Hlévargr, Glóinn,
Skirfir, Virvir, Skáfiðr, Ái,
16. ‘Álfr ok Yngvi, Eikinskjaldi;
þat man æ uppi, meðan óld lifir,
langniðja tal Lofars hafat.
17. ‘Unz þrír kómu, þussa braðr (?),
ástgir ok ǫflgir, Æsir, at húsi;
fundu á landi, lítt megandi,
Ask ok Emblu, ørlöglausa.

9. 'Then all the great powers, the most holy gods,
went to their doom-seats and deliberated about it:
 which dwarves should devise companies
 from bloody surf and from Bláinn's limbs.⁹
10. 'There Móðsognir¹⁰ was made greatest
 of all dwarves, and Durinn second;
 they made many man-shapes,
 dwarves, in the earth,¹¹ as Durinn said.¹²
11. 'Nýi, Niði, Norðri, Suðri,
 Austri, Vestri, Alþjófr, Dvalinn,
 Nár and Náinn,¹³ Nípingr,¹⁴ Dáinn,¹⁵
 Veggr¹⁶ Gandálfr, Vindálfr, Porinn,¹⁷
12. 'Bifurr, Báfur, Bómburr, Nóri,
 Án and Ónarr, Ái, Mjöðvitnir,
 Þrár¹⁸ and Þráinn, Þrór, Litr and Vitr,
 Nýr¹⁹ and Nýráðr — now I have enumerated —
 Reginn and Ráðsviðr — the warriors²⁰ rightly.
13. 'Fíli, Kíli, Fundinn, Náli,
 Hefti, Fíli, Hánarr and Sviðr,²¹
 Nár and Náinn, Nípingr, Dáinn,²²
 Billingr,²³ Brúni,²⁴ Bíldr²⁵ and Búri,²⁶
 Frór,²⁷ Fornbogi,²⁸ Fræg²⁹ and Lóni,
 Aurvangr, Jari, Eikinskjaldi.
14. 'It's time to count the dwarves in Dvalinn's company
 for the descendants of men — down to Lofarr —
 for those³⁰ who set out from Salarsteinn
 for the dwellings of Aurvanger at Jøruvellir.
15. 'There was Draufnir and Dólgbrasir,
 Hár, Haugspori, Hlévargr,³¹ Glóinn,³²
 Skirfir, Virvir, Skáfiðr, Ái,
16. 'Álfr and Yngvi, Eikinskjaldi;
that will always be remembered as long as the world lasts,³³
 the long list of Lofarr's forefathers.
17. 'Until three came, brothers(?) of giants,³⁴
 kind and strong, Æsir, to a house;
they found on the shore, with little strength,
 Askr and Embla, lacking fate.

18. 'Qnd þau né áttu, óð þau né hófðu,
lá né læti né litu góða;
qnd gaf Óðinn, óð gaf Hoenir,
lá gaf Lóðurr ok litu góða.
19. 'Ask veit ek standa, heitir Yggdrasill,
hár baðmr ausinn hvíta auri;
þaðan koma dögvar, þær í dala falla,
stendr æ yfir grønn Urðar brunni.
20. 'Þaðan koma meyjar, margs vitandi,
þrjár, ór þeim sal er á þolli stendr;
Urð hétu eina, aðra Verðandi —
skáru á skíði — Skuld ina þriðju;
þær lög lögðu, þær líf kuru
alda börnum, orlög at segja.
21. 'Þá gengu regin qll á rökstóla,
ginnheilög guð, ok um þat gættusk:
hverr hefði lopt allt lævi blandit
eða ætt jötuns Óðs mey gefna.
22. 'Þórr einn þar vá, þprunginn móði;
hann sjaldan sitr er hann slíkt of fregn;
á gengusk eiðar, orð ok sœri,
mál qll meginlig er á meðal váru.
23. 'Veit hon Heimdallar hljóð um fólgit
undir heiðvönum helgum baðmi;
á sér hon ausask aurgum forsi
af veði Valföðrs. Vitu þér enn, eða hvat?
24. 'Austr býr hin aldna í Járniði
ok fœðir þar Fenris kindir;
verðr af þeim qllum einna nökkurr
tungls tjúgari í trolls hamí.
25. 'Fyllisk fjørvi feigra manna,
rýðr ragna sjot rauðum dreyra;
svört verða sólskin um sumur eptir,
veðr qll válýnd. Vitu þér einn enn, eða hvat?
26. 'Þat man hon fólkvíg fyrst í heimi,
er Gullveig geirum studdi,
ok í hóll Hárs hana brendu;
þrysvar brendu þrysvar borna,
opt, ósjaldan, þó hon enn lifir.

18. 'They possessed no breath, they had no inspiration,
no locks or voice or good colours;
Óðinn gave breath, Hoenir gave inspiration,
Lóðurr gave locks and good colours.
19. 'I know a standing ash, it's called Yggdrasill,
a tall tree doused with white mud;
from there come dews, those that fall in dales;
it always stands, green, above Urðr's spring.
20. 'From there come maidens, knowing many things,
three [maidens], from the hall³⁵ which stands by³⁶ the tree;
one was called Urðr, the second Verðandi
— they inscribed on a stick — the third Skuld;
they laid down laws, they chose lives
for the sons of men, to state destinies.³⁷
21. 'Then all the great powers, the most holy gods,
went to their doom-seats and deliberated about it:
who³⁸ had mingled all the air with mischief,
and given Óðr's wife to the giant's family.
22. 'Þórr alone struck there,³⁹ swollen with anger;
he seldom sits when he hears of such;
oaths were stamped on, words and sworn declarations,
all the binding speeches which were between them.
23. 'She knows of Heimdallr's hearing,
hidden under the light-accustomed holy tree;
she sees a river splashing in a muddy fall
from Valfǫðr's pledge. Would you know still [more], or what?
24. 'East in Járniðr dwells the old one
and gives birth there to Fenrir's brood;
from among all those a certain one becomes
the moon's pitchforker(?) in troll's form.
25. 'He fills himself with the flesh of the doomed,
reddens gods' dwellings with red blood;
dark becomes the sunshine in following summers,
all weather treacherous. Would you know still one [more thing], or what?⁴⁰
26. 'She recalls it, the first tribe-war in the world,
when he stuck⁴¹ Gullveig up on spears,
and in Hárr's hall they burned her;
thrice they burned the thrice-born,
often, not seldom, yet she still lives.

27. 'Heiði hana hétu, hvars til húsa kom,
ok vølu velspá, vitti hon ganda;
seið hon hvars hon kunni, seið hon hugleikin,
æ var hon angan illrar brúðar.
28. 'Þá gengu regin qll á rökstóla,
ginnheilög goð, ok um þat gættusk,
hvárt skyldu Æsir afráð gjalda
eðr skyldu guðin qll gildi eiga.
29. 'Fleygði Óðinn ok í fólk um skaut;
þat var enn fólkvíg fyrr í heimi;
brotinn var borðveggr borgar Ása,
knáttu Vanir vígspá vøllu sporna.
30. 'Þá kná Vála vígbond snúa,
heldr váru harðgor høpt ór þormum;
þar sitr Sigyn, þeygi um sínum
ver velglyjuð. Vitu þér enn, eða hvat?
31. 'Geyr Garmr mjók fyr Gnúpahelli,
festr man slitna en freki renna;
fram sé ek lengra, fjolð kann ek segja
um ragna rök rømm, sigtíva.
32. 'Sat þar á haugi ok sló hørpu
gýgjar hirðir, glaðr Eggþér;
gól yfir honum í gálgviði,
fagrrauðr hani, en sá Fjalar्र heitir.
33. 'Gól yfir Ásum Gullinkambi,
sá vekr hølða at Herjaföðrs;
en annarr gelr fyr jørð neðan,
sótrauðr hani, at solum Heljar.
34. 'Sal sér hon standa sólu fjari,
Náströndum á, norðr horfa dyrr;
falla eitrdropar inn um ljóra,
sá er undinn salr orma hryggjum.
35. 'Sér hon þar vaða þunga strauma
menn meinsvara ok morðvarga,
ok þanns annars glepr eyrarúnu;
þar saug Niðhoggr nái framgengna,
sleit vargr vera. Vitu þér enn, eða hvat?

27. 'Heiðr they called her, wherever she came to houses,
and a seeress of good prophecies; she drummed up spirits(?);
she practised sorcery wherever she could, she practised sorcery
while spirit-possessed,⁴²
she was ever the delight of an evil bride.
28. 'Then all the great powers, the most holy gods,
went to their doom-seats and deliberated about it:
whether the Æsir must pay a great penalty,
or all the gods must have offerings.
29. 'Óðinn let fly and shot into the army;
that was still the tribe-war earlier⁴³ in the world;
broken was the board-wall⁴⁴ of the Æsir's stronghold,
the Vanir bestrode the plains with a battle-spell.
30. 'Then one(?) can twist Váli's battle-bonds,
those fetters were made fairly hard, from bowels,⁴⁵
there sits Sigyn by her husband,
though not well-pleased. Would you know still [more], or what?
31. 'Garmr howls loudly before Gnúpahellir,⁴⁶
the fetter will break and the raven run free;
I see further ahead, I can say many things
about the great doom of the powers, of the victory-gods.⁴⁷
32. 'A giantess's herdsman, happy Eggþér,
sat there on a grave-mound and struck a harp;
above him, in the gallows-tree,⁴⁸ crowed
a fair-red cockerel, and he's called Fjalarr.
33. 'Gullinkambi crowed above the Æsir,
he wakens heroes in Herjafǫr's hall;
but another crows beneath the earth,
a sooty-red cockerel, in the halls of Hel.
34. 'She sees a hall standing far from the sun,
on Nástrandir,⁴⁹ the doors face north;
venom-drops fall in through the roof-vent;
that hall is wound with the spines of snakes.
35. 'There she sees wading swift currents
perjured people and murder-wolves,
and the one who seduces another's wife;
there Niðhoggr sucked the corpses of the deceased,
the wolf tore men. Would you know still [more], or what?

36. 'Geyr nú Garmr mjók fyr Gnúpahelli,
 festr man slitna en freki renna;
 fram sé ek lengra, fjolð kann ek segja
 um ragna rök römm, sigtíva.
37. 'Brœðr munu berjask ok at bönum verðask,
 munu systrunar sifjum spilla;
 hart er í heimi, hórdómr mikill;
 skeggold, skálmauld — skildir klofnir —
 vindold, vargold, áðr verold steypisk;
 grundir gjalla, gífr fljúgandi;
 man engi maðr óðrum þyrra.
38. 'Leika Míms synir, en mjötuðr kyndisk
 at inu gamla Gjallarhorni;
 hátt blaess Heimdallr — horn er á lopti —
 mælir Óðinn við Míms hófuð.
39. 'Skelfr Yggdrasils askr standandi;
 ymr it aldnatré, en jötunn losnar;
 hræðask allir á Helvegum,
 áðr Surtar þann sefi of gleypir.
40. 'Hvat er með Ásum? Hvat er með álfum?
 Gnýr allr Jötunheimr, Æsir eru á þingi;
 stynja dvergar fyr steindurum,
 vegbergs vísis. Vitu þér enn, eða hvat?
41. 'Geyr nú Garmr mjók fyr Gnipahelli,
 festr man slitna en freki renna;
 fram sé ek lengra, fjolð kann ek segja
 um ragna rök römm, sigtíva.
42. 'Hrymr ekr austan, hefisk lind fyrir,
 snýsk Jörmungandr í jötunmóði,
 ormr knýr unnir, en ari hlakkar,
 slítr nái niðförlr, Naglfar losnar.
43. 'Kjóll ferr austan, koma munu Muspells
 um lög lýðir, en Loki stýrir;
 fara fíflmegir með freka allir,
 þeim er bróðir Býleists í ferð.
44. 'Surtr ferr sunnan með sviga lævi,
 skínn af sverði sól valtíva;
 grjótbjörg gnata en gífr hrata,
 troða halir Helveg, en himinn klofnar.

36. 'Now Garmr howls loudly before Gnúpahellir,
the fetter will break and the wolf run free;
I see further ahead, I can say many things
about the great doom of the powers, of the victory-gods.
37. 'Brothers will battle and slay each other,
cousins will break the bonds of kin;
it's harsh in the world, great whoredom,
axe-age, sword-age — shields are cloven —
wind-age, wolf-age, before the world collapses;
grounds cry out, greedy ones are flying;⁵⁰
no one will show mercy to another.
38. 'Mímr's sons play, and destiny is kindled
at [the sound of?] the ancient⁵¹ Gjallarhorn;
Heimdallr blows loud — the horn's aloft —
Óðinn speaks to Mímr's head.
39. 'The ash of Yggdrasill shakes as it stands;
the ancient tree groans, and the giant breaks loose;⁵²
all are afraid on the Hel-ways,⁵³
before Surtr's kinsman swallows that one.⁵⁴
40. 'How is it with the Æsir? How is it with the elves?
All Jötunheimr roars, the Æsir are in council;
dwarves groan before stone-doors,
wise ones of the way-rock.⁵⁵ Would you know still [more], or what?
41. 'Now Garmr howls loudly before Gnipahellir,
the fetter will break and the ravener run free;
I see further ahead, I can say many things
about the great doom of the powers, of the victory-gods.
42. 'Hrymr drives from the east, heaves his shield before him,
Jörmungandr writhes in giant-rage,
the snake lashes waves, and the eagle shrieks,
the one dim as the dark moon(?)⁵⁶ tears corpses, Naglfar breaks loose.
43. 'A ship fares from the east, Muspell's forces
will come over the sea, and Loki steers;
all the giant-kindred travel with the ravener,
Býleistr's brother⁵⁷ is with them on the journey.⁵⁸
44. 'Surtr travels from the south with the destruction of twigs,
the sun shines from the sword of the gods of the slain;
rocky cliffs collapse and witches tumble,⁵⁹
men tread the Hel-Way, and the heavens are cloven.

45. 'Þá kømr Hlínar harmr annarr fram,
er Óðinn ferr við úlf vega,
en bani Belja bjartr at Surti;
þar man Friggjar falla angan.
46. 'Geyr nú Garmr mjók fyr Gnipahelli,
festr man slitna en freki renna;
fram sé ek lengra, fjolð kann ek segja
um ragna rök rømm, sigtíva.
47. 'Gínn lopt yfir lindi jarðar,
gapa ýgs kjaptar orms í hæðum;
mun Óðins son ormi moeta,
vargs at dauða Víðars niðja.
48. 'Gengr fet níu Fjörgynjar burr,
neppr, frá naðri niðs ókvíðnum;
munu halir allir heimstlöð ryðja,
er af móði drepr Miðgarðs véurr.
49. 'Sól téir sortna, sígr fold í mar,
hverfa af himni heiðar stjórnur;
geisar eimi ok aldnari,
leikr hár hiti við himin sjálfan.
50. 'Geyr nú Garmr mjók fyr Gnipahelli,
festr man slitna en freki renna;
fram sé ek lengra, fjolð kann ek segja
um ragna rök rømm, sigtíva.
51. 'Sér hon upp koma qđru sinni
jørð ór ægi, iðjagrœna;
falla forsar, flygr ɔrn yfir,
sá er á fjalli fiska veiðir.
52. 'Hittask Æsir á Iðavelli
ok um moldþinur mátkan dœma,
ok minnask þar á megindóma
ok á Fimbultýs fornar rúnar.
53. 'Þá munu Æsir undrsamligar
gullnar tqflur í grasi finna,
þær í árdaga áttar høfðu.
54. 'Munu ósánir akrar vaxa,
bøls man alls batna; man Baldr koma;
búa þeir Höðr ok Baldr Hropts sigtóptir,
vel, velltívar. Vitu þér enn, eða hvat?

45. 'Then Hlín's second sorrow comes to pass,
when Óðinn goes to fight against the wolf,
and the bright slayer of Beli against Surtr;
there Frigg's fragrant one⁶⁰ will fall.
46. 'Now Garmr howls loudly before Gnipahellir,
the fetter will break and the ravener run free;
I see further ahead, I can say many things
about the great doom of the powers, of the victory-gods.
47. 'The earth's girdle⁶¹ yawns across the sky,⁶²
the jaws of the ghastly snake gape in the heights;⁶³
Óðinn's son⁶⁴ will meet the snake,
following the death of the wolf of Víðarr's kinsman.⁶⁵
48. 'Fjörgyn's son⁶⁶ goes nine steps,
expiring(?), from the snake unapprehensive of the dark moon(?);
all men will abandon the homestead
when Miðgarðr's guardian strikes in anger.⁶⁷
49. 'The sun turns black, earth sinks into the sea,
bright stars vanish from the sky;
ember-smoke rages and⁶⁸ the life-nourisher,⁶⁹
high heat sports against the sky itself.
50. 'Now Garmr howls loudly before Gnipahellir,
the fetter will break and the ravener run free;
I see further ahead, I can say many things
about the great doom of the powers, of the victory-gods.
51. 'She sees coming up for a second time
earth, green again, from the sea;
waterfalls tumble, an eagle flies above,
the one who hunts fish on the fell.
52. 'The Æsir meet on Iðavöllr
and talk about the great earth-rope,
and there remember great dooms⁷⁰
and Fimbultýr's ancient runes.
53. 'Then in the grass the Æsir⁷¹ will find
wonderful golden gaming-pieces,
those they had owned in early days.
54. 'Unsown fields will sprout,
all evil will be corrected; Baldr will come;
Höðr and Baldr will inhabit Hropr's victory-halls,
well, [as] gold(?)-gods.⁷² Would you know still [more], or what?

55. 'Þá kná Hœnir hlutvið kjósa,
er burir byggja brœðra tveggja
vindheim víðan. Vitu þér enn, eða hvat?
56. 'Sal sér hon standa, sólu fegra,
gulli þakðan, á Gimlé;
þar skulu dyggvar dróttir byggja
ok um aldrdaga ynðis njóta.
57. 'Þá kœmr inn ríki at regindómi,
qflugr, ofan, sá er ɔllu ræðr.
58. 'Kœmr inn dimmi dreki fljúgandi,
naðr fránn, neðan frá Niðafjöllum;
berr sér í fjöldum — flýgr vøll yfir —
Niðhöggr, nái. Nú man hon søkkvask.'

55. ‘Then Hœnir can select the [sacrificial] lot-twig,
when the sons of two brothers inhabit
the wide wind-home. Would you know still [more], or what?’
56. ‘She sees a hall standing, fairer than the sun,
thatched with gold, on Gimlé;
there shall honourable hosts settle
and enjoy delight during their life-days.
- 57.⁷³ ‘Then the commanding one⁷⁴ comes to divine judgement(?),⁷⁵
the mighty one, from above, the one who rules all.
58. ‘The dim dragon comes flying,
the glistening snake, from beneath, from Niðafjöll;
Niðhöggr carries in his wings — he flies over the field —
corpses. Now she will sink.’

Textual Apparatus to *Völuspá* (*Hauksbók*)

Judging from the facsimile pages published in Jón Helgason, *Hauksbók: The Arna-Magnæan Manuscripts 371, 4^{to}, 544, 4^{to}, and 675, 4^{to}* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1960), much of H's text of *Vsp.* is hard to read. Worse, parts are illegible and a few words have been lost with the top left-hand corner of fol. 21. The present text relies heavily—in places entirely—on the transcription in Eiríkur Jónsson and Finnur Jónsson, ed., *Hauksbók udgiven efter de Arnamagnæanske håndskrifter no. 371, 544 og 675, 4^o samt forskellige papirhåndskrifter af Det kongelige nordiske Oldskriftselskab*, 3 vols. (Copenhagen: Thieles, 1892–96), I, 188–92, supplemented by the corrections and intuitions in Jón Helgason, ed., *Eddadigte*, 3 vols. (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1951–52), I, 44–46. For online photographs, see 'AM 544 4^{to}', *handrit.is*, <https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/AM04-0544> (fol. 20r–21r). This edition normalizes the spelling, including many simple variants, such as *ll* for *l* and *nn* for *n*. Where the Jónssons expand the abbreviation for *fyr/fyri/fyrir* as *fyri*, this edition has *fyr*.

Völuspá] This poem is untitled in H, but the name *Völuspá* is used repeatedly in *SnEGylf*

1/5 *Viltv*] H *villtv*; illegible in the facsimile, so this reading relies on earlier editions

1/5 *Váfðors*] Illegible in the facsimile, so this reading relies on earlier editions

2/6 *íviðjur*] H *i uiðjur*

5/4 *himinjoður*] H *ioður*

6/4 *gættusk*] H *giettuz*

7/8 *gorðu*] H *giþrðu*

9/4 *gættusk*] H *giættuz*

9/8 *Bláins*] H *blains* or *blams*

10/5 *manlíkun*] H *manlikan*

10/6 *gorðu*] H *giorðu*

13/10 *Fræg*] H *freg*, according to Jón Helgason

17/1 *þrír*] H *þriar*(?), but with *-a-* erased (perhaps by a later hand); the text in this area is indistinct

17/2 *þussa braðr(?)*] H *þussa*, apparently followed by *bruðir* 'brides', but the latter word is almost entirely obliterated; cf. 8/6

24/7 *tjúgari*] H the first three letters of this word are illegible; they are supplied here from R

26/7] H these words are repeated, but crossed out

26/10 *enn*] H *en*

27/4 *vitti*] H *viti*

28/4 *gættusk*] H *giettuz*

30/3 *harðgør*] H *harðgior*

32/4 *Eggþér*] H *egðir*

32/5 *honum*] H absent; supplied from R

34/1 sér] **H** sier

34/3 Náströndum] Jón Helgason discerns a nasal stroke above the *u* in **H**

35/6 eyrarúnu] **H** eyrna runa

36/2 Gnúpahelli – 36/8] **H** Gn. h. f man sl enn, with the rest of the line hard to make out. The stanza is apparently abbreviated; the rest of it is supplied from st. 31.

37/7 skeggold] **H** skeggoll, which could be translated ‘axe-shriek’, but this edition emends from **R**

37/13 engi] **H** eingi

40/6 steindurum] **H** steindyrum

41/3–8] **H** fm. The stanza is abbreviated

43/5 fara] **H** farar, according to Jón Helgason; emended from **R**

43/6 allir] **H** aller, according to Jón Helgason; other scholars read *aþrer* (i.e., *aðrir* ‘other’)

46/3–8] **H** fm. The stanza is abbreviated

47/1–8] The writing at the bottom of f. 20v is mostly illegible. The text of this stanza is based on the tentative transcription of Jón Helgason (*Eddadigte*, I, 13, 44–46), which was made with the help of an ultraviolet lamp.

48/1–8] This stanza is illegible at the foot of f. 20v. This reconstruction again relies on Jón Helgason; cf. **R** 54.

49/1 Sól] **H** torn away with corner of folio 21; supplied from **R**

49/5 geisar] **H** ge- torn away; supplied from **R**

50/1 nú] **H** torn away; supplied from **R**

50/4 renna –50/8] **H** r. The stanza is abbreviated

51/1 Sér] **H** Sé- torn away; supplied from **R**

58/1 dimmi] **H** dimi

58/4 Niðafjöllum] **H** niða ‘(from) Niði’; owing to clear metrical deficiency, the text is emended from **R**

58/5 sér] **H** sier

Notes to the Translation

- 1 For fuller commentary on stanzas in **H** that find parallel in **R**, see the notes to the latter.
- 2 *Vsp.* **R** 1 lacks the adjective *helgar* ‘holy’.
- 3 Sg. (see following note).
- 4 The interpretation of the second half of this stanza, which differs from that of **R**, is debatable; textual corruption is a distinct possibility. *Váfpðrs* (if the name is not rather *Vafþðrs*) could be the gen. sg. of *Váfpðr* ‘Woe Father’, an otherwise unattested alias of the god Óðinn (though Loki has also been suggested), but note the similar-looking Óðinn-aliases *Valfþðr*

'Corpse Father' in *Vsp.* R 1 and *Váfuðr* 'Waverer' in *Grm.* 54. Instead of *vel* 'well', *vél* 'wile', 'trickery', 'treachery' is a possibility (though pl. *vélar* 'wiles' might be preferable), as Old Norse literature abounds with tales of Óðinn's wiliness and treachery: 'Do you wish that I expound Váföðr's trickery ...?' Uppermost in the poet's mind might then be Óðinn's treacherous killing of a kinsman, the giant Ymir, which may lie behind the creation of Miðgarðr in *Vsp.* H 4 (see *SnEGylf* 6–7, p. 11)—although Ymir's slaying is not explicit in *Vsp.*—or the burning of Gullveig in his hall in H 26. It is unclear who the seeress of H is addressing with the sg. form *viltu* (MS *villtv*; by contrast, R's *vildu* clearly addresses Valföðr); perhaps she addresses Óðinn, first as *-tu* and then as *Váföðr*; or maybe she speaks to a single, unnamed representative of all the beings in her audience. It is also uncertain whether her words here are interrogative, especially as her subsequent questions in H are in the pl. (*Vitu þér ...?*), presumably to address all members of her audience. Yet another complication is that *Váföðrs ... forn spjoll fira* could also be translated 'ancient tales of Váföðr's living (beings)', given that Óðinn was also called *Alföðr* 'All-Father'. Overall, R's version of this stanza presents fewer problems.

- 5 'Borer's'; *Vsp.* R 4 has 'Burr's'.
- 6 I.e., the horizon. The emendation of *joður* to *himinjoður* 'sky-rim' supplies required metrical length and alliteration; cf. *Vsp.* R 5's *himinjódýr*.
- 7 This line appears only in H.
- 8 *Pussa* 'of giants' is an assimilated form of *pursa*. Cf. *pussa bræðr* 'brothers of giants' (an emendation) in *Vsp.* H 17.
- 9 On the difficulties of the second half of this stanza, see notes to *Vsp.* R 9.
- 10 *Vsp.* R 10 has *Mótsognir*.
- 11 *Vsp.* R 10 has *ór jörðu* 'from earth'.
- 12 On the many difficulties of this stanza, see notes to *Vsp.* R 10, the text of which differs.
- 13 'Corpse-Like One'.
- 14 'Pinch'.
- 15 '(One Who Has) Died'.
- 16 'Wedge' or 'Wall'.
- 17 There are many differences between H and R in their lists of dwarf-names.
- 18 'Stubborn'.
- 19 'New'.
- 20 ON *rekkar* usually denotes men (cf. st. 10's *manlíkun* 'man-shapes'), though a dwarf called *Rekkr* appears in *SnEGylf* (14, p. 16) in a list derived from a version of *Vsp.* *Vsp.* R 12 has *dverga* 'dwarves'.
- 21 'Wise' or 'Swift'.
- 22 These four names are repeated from st. 11.
- 23 'Twin'.
- 24 'Brown One'.
- 25 'Lancet', ostensibly at least.
- 26 Perhaps 'Son'.
- 27 'Swift'.

- 28 'Ancient Bow'.
- 29 'Famous'.
- 30 H's *þeim* 'for those' appears inferior to *Vsp.* R 14's *þeir* 'they'.
- 31 'Lee Wolf'.
- 32 'Glowing One'.
- 33 Or 'as long as beings continue to live', or 'as long as the age lasts'.
- 34 Instead of *pussa bræðr* (an emendation of *pussa brúðir*(?) 'brides of giants'), *Vsp.* R 17 has *ór því liði* 'from that company'. As neither passage makes good sense, there is presumably some deep textual corruption. The tentative emendation of H to *pussa bræðr* 'brothers of giants' is made on the basis that, of the three Æsir named in the next stanza, Óðinn, at least, was akin to the giants. Cf. *pussa meyjar* 'maidens of giants' in *Vsp.* H 8.
- 35 *SnEGylf* (15, p.18) similarly has *ór þeim sal* 'from the hall', but *Vsp.* R 20 has *ór þeim sæ* 'from the sea (lake?)'.
- 36 Alternatively, 'on' or 'in'. *Vsp.* R 20 places its sea 'under' the tree, as does *SnEGylf* (15, p. 18).
- 37 H's *ørlog at segja* 'to state destinies/fates' differs from R's *ørlog seggja* 'the fates of men'.
- 38 Sg., whereas *Vsp.* R 25 has pl. *hverir*.
- 39 He probably struck a giant builder; see note to *Vsp.* R 25.
- 40 Here the seeress's interrogative refrain differs slightly, though perhaps only due to scribal error.
- 41 Most likely Óðinn, but *studdi* could also mean 'she/it/one struck'. The subject switches to the pl. in the next line, so sg. *studdi* might be an error for *studdu* 'they stuck', which is the reading of *Vsp.* R 21; alternatively, R may have simplified matters.
- 42 Alternatively, the second half of this line might mean 'she practised magic determinedly' or 'she practised magic to her heart's delight'. *Vsp.* R 22 has *seið hon kunni*, *seið hon leikin* (emended; see note thereto for the difficulties of interpretation).
- 43 Where H has *fyr* 'previously, earlier', *Vsp.* R 24 has *fyrst* 'first'.
- 44 Presumably a form of stockade. *Vsp.* R 24 has *borðvegr* 'board-way'.
- 45 The first half of this stanza sits awkwardly here and is absent from R. It gives no location for Sigyn, Loki's wife, to sit in. Also, the grammatical subject of the first line is unclear: 'he', 'she', 'it' or 'one'? Some editors emend *Vála* to *Váli* to give the sense 'Then Váli can [or 'did'] twist battle-bonds'. If this change is correct, we might surmise that Váli, whom Óðinn sired to avenge Baldr's murder (*Vsp.* R 32), took revenge not just on the morally innocent Höðr but also on Loki, the fundamentally guilty party, by fettering him. *SnEGylf* (50, p. 49), however, tells of another Váli, a son of Loki, whom the gods turned into a wolf, who tore apart his own brother, Narfi (or Nari). As punishment for Baldr's death, the gods then bound Loki across three stones using Váli's (or Narfi's) intestines, whereupon those bonds (*bond*) turned to iron.
- 46 *Gnúpahellir* is a variant of *Gnipahellir* found only in H, which attests both forms.
- 47 The second half of this refrain stanza differs somewhat from that of R.
- 48 The 'gallows-tree' could be the world-ash, elsewhere called 'Óðinn's gallows' (*gálgi Óðins*); alternatively, translate 'Gallows Wood', perhaps a sacrificial grove. *Vsp.* R 41 has *gaglvíði* '(in the) gosling-tree/wood'.

- 49 ‘Corpse-Shores’; *Vsp.* R 37 has sg. *SnEGylf* (52, p. 53) attests the same two forms.
- 50 This line appears only in **H**. The ‘greedy ones’ are witches or other monstrous females.
- 51 *Vsp.* R 45 has *galla* ‘resonant’.
- 52 These two lines are in reverse order in *Vsp.* R 46.
- 53 Roads to Hel, land of the dead.
- 54 The second half of this stanza appears only in **H**. Surtr is a fire-demon, but ‘Surtr’s kinsman’ is obscure. In *Fj.*, the giantess Simmara is apparently Surtr’s close relative, but if the term ‘Surtr’s kinsman’ does not denote an animate creature, it might be a kenning for ‘fire’, in which case *pann* ‘that one’ (masc.) would presumably refer back to the ‘ash of Yggdrasil’, which will be consumed by fire, the ‘destruction of twigs’ (*Vsp.* H 44, R 51) that ‘sports against heaven itself’ (*Vsp.* H 49, R 55). But Fenrir has also been suggested as Surtr’s kinsman, in which case *pann* could be Óðinn.
- 55 Rock is imagined as the dwarves’ highway; *Vsp.* R 50 has ‘of the wall-rock’ (*veggbergs*).
- 56 **H** and *SnEGylf* have *niðfölr* or *níðfölr*, for which there are several possible meanings. *Niðfölr* could mean ‘waning/dark-moon pale/dim’ or ‘rust-pale’ (i.e., yellow); *níðfölr* could mean ‘derision-pale’ or ‘hostilely pale’. It is also unclear whether the word describes the eagle of the previous line or another creature, such as the dragon Niðhoggr. *Vsp.* R 48 has *neffölr* ‘fallow-nosed one’.
- 57 Loki; *Býleistr* ‘Farmstead Foot/Sock(?)’ (*Býleiptr*, possibly ‘Farmstead Lightning’, in *Vsp.* R 49) might well be Óðinn.
- 58 **H** has *ferð* where *Vsp.* R 49 has *fyr*. Both nouns mean ‘journey’, ‘voyage’.
- 59 Or ‘rush headlong’ (*hrata*); *Vsp.* R 51 has *rata* ‘wander’.
- 60 I.e., Óðinn. *Vsp.* R 52 has *Angantýr*.
- 61 A kenning for the Miðgarðsormr, the world-encircling snake.
- 62 Cf. the gaping void of *Vsp.* 3.
- 63 *SnEGylf* (51, p. 50) says that the wolf Fenrir (not the Miðgarðsormr) will ‘go with gaping mouth and the upper jaw will be against the sky and the lower against the earth. He would gape more if there were room to’. A carving on the tenth-century Anglo-Norse Gosforth Cross in Cumbria shows a figure, probably identifiable as Óðinn’s son Víðarr, separating the gaping jaws of a huge wolf-headed snake.
- 64 Þórr.
- 65 The ‘wolf of Víðarr’s kinsman’ appears to be Fenrir, the wolf that kills Óðinn and is then, according to *Vsp.* R 53, slain in vengeance by Víðarr, Óðinn’s son. ‘Víðarr’s kinsman’ is either Óðinn or Loki, Fenrir’s father, who entered into blood-brotherhood with Óðinn (*Ls.* 9). This impressive stanza appears only in **H**, where it is largely illegible to the naked eye.
- 66 Þórr.
- 67 This stanza is largely illegible in **H**; what is presented here is a somewhat speculative reconstruction that draws on *Vsp.* R 54.
- 68 *Vsp.* R 55 has *við* ‘against’.
- 69 In **H**, at least, the ‘life-nourisher’ is probably fire.
- 70 I.e., ‘great/mighty judgements’; alternatively, ‘great events’. This line is missing from *Vsp.* R 58.

- 71 *Vsp.* R 59 has *eptir* 'again'.
- 72 The nature of these *velltívar* 'gold-gods' is unclear—perhaps gold-dispensing gods or peerless gods. Or should *velltívar* be *véltívar* 'craft-gods'? Another possibility is *veltívar* 'benign gods', if Högðr had been, as *SnEGylf* indicates, merely the unwitting instrument of Baldr's murder. Deliberate ambiguity is possible. However, the sequence *vel vell-* appears stylistically awkward, and *vell-* could result from dittography. *Vsp.* R 60's *valtívar* 'gods of the slain' might therefore be preferable.
- 73 This half-stanza appears only in **H**. Scholars disagree about whether it is a late Christian addition.
- 74 The identity of this male personage is uncertain (cf. *Hdl.* 44). He is, however, suggestive of Christ, or of Heimdallr, Óðinn or Baldr as potential 'types' of Christ. Note the unnamed *ríkr mjök ok máttugr* 'very powerful and mighty' divine controller of *SnEProl* (1, pp. 3–4); also the *Alföðr* 'All Father' of *SnEGylf* (3, p. 8), who is at once Óðinn and, being eternal, more than Óðinn—he is probably the creation of an accommodating Christian in order to suggest that heathens rightly perceived the existence of a single presiding deity and thereby to mediate between pagan and Christian beliefs.
- 75 Or 'great judgement', 'divine tribunal', 'divine power', 'kingdom of (heathen) powers', 'kingdom'—the intended sense of *regindómr* is unclear. Some scholars detect a reference to Doomsday and the Last Judgement.

Baldrs draumar

Baldrs draumar (*BDr.*) ‘Baldr’s Dreams’ survives in A, fol. 1v–2r, where it is found between *Hrbl.* and *FSk.* Its date of composition is unknown, but it perhaps postdates *Vsp.* Elements of the myth of Baldr and Hǫðr, which *BDr.* refers to, might be ancient, however, as aspects of their story are perhaps attached to differently named characters in the Indian *Mahabharata*.¹

BDr., which is in *fornyrðislag*, shares passages and themes with other Norse texts. The first stanza is similar to *Prk.* 14, but the basis of the correspondence is uncertain. Óðinn’s ride to Hel is closely paralleled by that of his son Hérmoðr (see below), and less obviously by Skírnir’s journey in *FSk.*, but it is normally only the dead who make this journey, as is apparently the case with Brynhildr in *Hlr.* The poem’s closest associations, though, are with *Hdl.* 29–44 (*Völuspá hin skamma* ‘The Short *Völuspá*’) and with *Vsp.*

In *Hdl.* the giantess Hyndla reveals information to the goddess Freyja. She tells of Baldr’s death and avenging by his brother Váli, and refers to Loki’s begetting of monstrous progeny and the doom of the gods—aspects paralleled in *BDr.* Furthermore, the seeress and ‘mother of three giants’ in *BDr.* is perhaps, if not Loki himself (disguised as the giantess *Pókk?*), the giantess Angrboða, on whom Loki sired Fenrir according to *Hdl.* 40.

In *Vsp.* a seeress who was fostered by giants informs Óðinn, among much else, of Baldr’s death, Váli’s vengeance, Loki’s release from bondage and Ragnarok. The correspondences may go further, as *BDr.* 9 might be indebted to *Vsp.* 31–32, and *BDr.* 11 might derive from *Vsp.* 32–33.

Nonetheless, these seeress-poems take different approaches. Whereas *Vsp.* and *Völuspá hin skamma* each have a single speaker, *BDr.* is largely a question-and-answer dialogue. As such, it may also be compared to the Óðinnic dialogue-poems *Hrbl.* and *Vm.* In the latter, Óðinn similarly visits a wise giant, whom he questions under an assumed name and confounds with an unanswerable question about Baldr that reveals his true identity.

Although *BDr.* has left no obvious imprint on other medieval literature, its central concern—Baldr’s death—is, as we have seen, mentioned in other Eddic poems. The R text of *Vsp.* is the best Eddic source for this event. It devotes stanzas 31–34 to Baldr’s

¹ See J. Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology* (Baltimore, MD: Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 215.

death and its immediate consequences, and another stanza (60) to Baldr's return in the post-Ragnarok age, when he will live happily beside his brother and killer, Hǫðr. However, extant Old Norse poetry, despite mentioning Baldr often, provides little more information about his death. For that we must look to Old Norse prose and further afield.

The fullest source for Baldr's death and its aftermath is *SnEGylf* (49–50, pp. 45–49). Its sources include a stanza of *ljóðaháttir* (presumably from a lost Eddic poem) and the late tenth-century skaldic poem *Húsdr.* by Úlfr Uggason. The essentials of this version of the story are as follows:

Because Baldr was having bad dreams, the gods decided to protect him by requiring all created things to swear that they would not harm him. However, the malicious god Loki changed his appearance into that of a woman and learnt from Baldr's mother, Frigg, that the mistletoe had been exempted on account of its youth. He, seeing Baldr's blind brother, Hǫðr, standing weaponless while the other gods amused themselves by throwing things at the inviolate Baldr, urged him to join in by throwing the mistletoe. Guided by Loki, he threw it and killed Baldr.

The grief-stricken gods determined to ransom Baldr from Hel. Óðinn's son Hermóðr volunteered and set out for Hel on the horse Sleipnir.² Meanwhile, Baldr's body was cremated on his ship beside his wife, Nanna, and in the presence of a great assembly of gods, valkyries and giants. Hermóðr eventually reached Hel and begged its eponymous queen for Baldr's return. This she would only grant if Baldr were proven to be as loved as Hermóðr claims: everything in the world must weep for him. When the gods heard this they sent messengers throughout the world to request that everything 'weep Baldr out of Hel'. Everything did, except for a giantess ironically called *Pøkk* 'Thanks', who was presumed to be Loki in disguise.

In their anger at this treachery, the gods caught Loki and bound him on three stones with the guts of his son. They suspended a snake above him, so that its venom dripped onto his face. His wife, Sigyn, attends him, catching some of the venom in a bowl. But when she leaves to empty it, the venom falls on Loki and he writhes in agony. There he lies bound—until Ragnarok.

The story of Baldr and Hǫðr also survives—albeit in markedly different and non-eschatological form—in the third book of the thirteenth-century *GD* by Saxo Grammaticus. Another, also highly different, version of the tale may appear in the Old English heroic poem *Beowulf*. Neither version mentions Loki.

The most pertinent details of Saxo's account are as follows:

Balderus (Baldr) is a despicable demigod, a son of the god Othinus (Óðinn). His body can be pierced only by a sword belonging to the satyr Mimmingus. Hotherus (Hǫðr) is a fine, sighted warrior-king, unrelated to Balderus. The two clash over the love of Nanna, Hotherus' foster-sister, and over power. After several battles, they meet for a final time and Hotherus, having obtained Mimmingus' sword, some of Balder's magic food and a magic girdle, stabs Balderus. The goddess of death appears to Balderus in a

² In *BDr.* it is Óðinn who rides Sleipnir to Hel.

dream, telling him that has only three days to live. He is mourned and buried royally in a mound. Othinus then seeks to avenge his son's death. To fulfil a prophecy by the Finn Rostiofphus (cf. Hrossþjóf in *Hdl.* 32) which stated that Rinda (Rindr) would bear him an avenging son, Othinus, disguised as a female nurse, rapes her. She bears him a child, Bo, who kills Hotherus, but who dies of his wounds the next day.

Beowulf's account is of men. Lines 2434–71 concern Beowulf's Geatish uncles Herebeald and Hæðcynn—whose respective name-elements *-beald* and *Hæð-* are cognate with ON *Baldr* and *Hoðr*—and the grief of their father, Hreðel, whose typification as an old man might recall Norse descriptions of Óðinn. Hæðcynn missed his mark and mistakenly shot Herebeald, his elder brother, with a bloody dart from a horn-tipped bow. Hrethel mourned Herebeald, but could not avenge his death.

Synopsis

BDr. tells of the gods' response to the worrying question of why the god Baldr was having bad dreams (1). His father, Óðinn, rides the horse Sleipnir down to the land of the dead, and, once past a barking hellhound (2–3), magically raises a seeress from her grave (4–5). He conceals his identity by using the pseudonym Vegtamr and demands to know for whom Hel's hall is so extravagantly prepared (6). She tells him it is for Baldr (7). Óðinn interrogates her further and learns the identities of his son's killer, Hoðr, and avenger, Váli (8–11). Óðinn's final question she does not (or cannot) answer, but it reveals his identity to her. He, in turn, identifies her as the mother of three giants and provokes an ironic riposte that reminds him of the impending Ragnarok (12–14).

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Baldrs draumar

1. Senn váru Æsir allir á þingi,
ok Ásynjur allar á máli,
ok um þat réðu ríkir tívar,
hví væri Baldri ballir draumar.
2. Upp reis Óðinn, alda Gautr,
ok hann á Sleipni sqðul um lagði;
reið hann niðr þaðan Niflheljar til,
møtti hann hvelpi, þeim er ór Helju kom.
3. Sá var blóðugr um brjóst framan,
ok galdrs fþdur gólf um lengi;
fram reið Óðinn, foldvegr dunði,
hann kom at hávu Heljar ranni.
4. Þá reið Óðinn fyr austan dyrr,
þar er hann vissi völum leiði;
nam hann vittugri valgaldr kveða,
unz nauðig reis, nás orð um kvað:
5. 'Hvat er manna þat, mér ókunnra,
er mér hefir aukit erfitt sinni?
Var ek snivin snjóvi ok slegin regni
ok drifin döggu — dauð var ek lengi!'
6. 'Vegtamr ek heiti, sonr em ek Valtams;
segðu mér ór Helju — ek man ór heimi —
hveim eru bekkir baugum sánir,
flet fagrliga flóuð gulli?'
7. 'Hér stendr Baldri of brugginn mjóðr,
skírar veigar, liggr skjöldr yfir,
en ásmegir í ofvæni.
Nauðug sagðak, nú mun ek þegja!'
8. 'Pegjattu, völva! Þik vil ek fregna!
Unz alkunna vil ek enn vita!
Hverr man Baldri at bana verða
ok Óðins son aldri ræna?'
9. 'Höðr berr hávan hróðrbarm þinig,
hann man Baldri at bana verða
ok Óðins son aldri ræna.
Nauðug sagðak, nú mun ek þegja!'

Baldr's Dreams

1. At once the *Æsir*¹ were all in assembly,
and the *Ásynjur*² all in consultation,
and the powerful deities deliberated about it,
why Baldr's dreams were baleful.³
2. Up rose Óðinn, Gautr of ages,⁴
and on Sleipnir he laid a saddle;
he rode from there down to Niflhel,⁵
he met a whelp, the one which came from Hel.⁶
3. It was bloody across the front of its breast,⁷
and it bayed long at the father of incantation;⁸
forward rode Óðinn, the earth-way resounded,
he came to the high hall of Hel.⁹
4. Then Óðinn rode east of the door,¹⁰
to where he knew a seeress's grave [to be];
incantations for the slain he spoke to the one wise in witchcraft,¹¹
until she rose under duress, spoke a dead body's words:
5. 'What kind of man is it, unknown to me,
who has made me [undertake] an arduous journey?
I was snowed-in with snow and lashed with rain
and drenched with dew — long was I dead!'¹²
6. 'I am called Vegtamr,¹³ I am the son of Valtamr;¹⁴
tell me news from Hel — I remember [things] from home¹⁵ —
for whom are the benches strewn with arm-rings,
the floor beautifully flooded with gold?'
7. 'Here stands mead brewed for Baldr,
shining drinks — a shield lies over them —
and the sons of the *Æsir*¹⁶ [are] in great anxiety.
I spoke under duress, now I shall be silent!'
8. 'Don't be silent, seeress! I want to question you!
Until all is known,¹⁷ I'll want to know more!
Who will be Baldr's slayer
and rob Óðinn's son of life?'
9. 'Höðr will bear the high glory-tree¹⁸ there,¹⁹
he will become Baldr's slayer
and rob Óðinn's son of life.
I spoke under duress, now I shall be silent!'

10. 'Pegjattu, völva! Þik vil ek fregna!
 Unz alkunna vil ek enn vita!
 Hverr man heipt Heði hefnt of vinna
 eða Baldrs bana á bál vega?'
11. 'Rindr berr Vála í vestrsólum,
 sá man Óðins sonr einnættr vega;
 hönd um þværa né hofuð kembir
 áðr á bál um berr Baldrs andskota.
 Nauðug sagðak, nú mun ek þegja!'
12. 'Pegjattu, völva! Þik vil ek fregna!
 Unz alkunna vil ek enn vita!
 Hverjar ru þær meyjar er at muni gráta
 ok á himin verpa hálsa skautum?'
13. 'Ertattu Vegtamr, sem ek hugða,
 heldr ertu Óðinn, aldinn Gautr!'
 'Ertattu völva né vís kona,
 heldr ertu þriggja þursa móðir!'
14. 'Heim ríð þú, Óðinn, ok ver hróðigr!
 Svá komit manna meirr aprt á vit
 er lauss Loki líðr ór böndum
 ok ragna rök rjúfendr koma!'

10. 'Don't be silent, seeress! I want to question you!
Until all is known, I'll want to know more!
Who will avenge Hǫðr's hateful deed
and bear Baldr's slayer to the pyre?'

11. 'Rindr will bear Váli²⁰ in western halls,²¹
that son of Óðinn will slay when one night old;
he won't wash his hands or comb his hair
before he bears Baldr's enemy to the pyre.
I spoke under duress, now I shall be silent!'

12. 'Don't be silent, seeress! I want to question you!
Until all is known, I'll want to know more!
Who are the maidens who will weep for their loved one²²
and cast their neck's corners²³ to the heavens?²⁴

13. 'You're not Vegtamr, as I thought,
rather you're Óðinn, the old Gautr!'²⁵
'You're neither a seeress nor a wise woman,
rather you're the mother of three giants!'²⁶

14. 'Ride home, Óðinn, and be proud!²⁷
May no one come back again to visit me thus
when²⁸ Loki slips loose from his bonds²⁹
and the doom of the powers comes tearing [down]!'

Textual Apparatus to *Baldrs draumar*

Baldrs draumar] The title is extremely faint in photographs of A; this edition therefore relies on the reading in Finnur Jónsson, *Håndskrifet Nr. 748, 4^{to}, bl. 1-6 i den Arna-magnæanske samling (Brudstykke af den ældre Edda) i fototypisk og diplomatisk gengivelse* (Copenhagen: Møller, 1896), p. 2

3/4 *gól um*] A *golu*

5/4 *erfitt*] A *ærfit*

6/7 *fagrliga*] A abbreviates *fagrl'*

6/8 *flóuð*] A *flop'*

9/8 *ek*] A omits in an abbreviation of these repeated words

11/1 *Vála*] A absent

11/5 *þværa*] A *þvær*

12/2–3 *vil ek fregna ... vita*] A omits in an abbreviation of these repeated words

13/4 *aldinn*] A *allda*, corrected to *alldin*

14/1 *Óðinn*] A *oðin*

Notes to the Translation

1 Gods.

2 Goddesses.

3 Cf. *Brk.* 14.

4 Or 'Gautr of men', *Gautr* being an alias of Óðinn. *Gautr* could also be a common noun meaning 'sacrificial victim (from whom blood has poured)' (cf. OE *geutan* 'to pour, shed') in reference to Óðinn's sacrifice of himself (*Háv.* 138–39) or of his eye (*Vsp.* 28) to gain knowledge. Cf. *aldinn Gautr* 'the old Gautr' in *BDr.* 13.

5 'Mist/Darkness Hel'.

6 With this hellhound, cf. Garmr in *Vsp.* 43, the dogs in *FSk.* 11 (and preceding prose) and *Fj.* 19–24, and Kerberos, the dog which guards the entrance to Hades in Greek mythology. Hel is here the Norse underworld of the dead.

7 The blood is presumably that of dead people whom the dog has devoured for trying to leave Hel, or of living people who have attempted to enter Hel.

8 Óðinn. Cf. Garmr's howling in *Vsp.* The initial prose to *Grm.* says that no dog will attack Óðinn.

9 Here Hel is either the underworld or the goddess who presides over it.

10 Presumably the door to Hel's hall.

11 Cf. *Háv.* 157.

12 Cf. *HH. II* 44.

13 'Way Ready (One)'.

14 'Slaughtered/Slain Accustomed (One)'.

- 15 I.e., the world of the living.
- 16 The gods themselves.
- 17 Or perhaps 'Until I'm all-knowing'.
- 18 *Hróðrbarmr* is an obscure term. Possibly it describes the mistletoe with which Höðr kills Baldr in Icelandic tradition, or Baldr himself. The adjective *hávan* 'high' might reflect either mistletoe's elevated position in a tree or Baldr's stature. Cf. *Vsp.* 31–32.
- 19 Or 'here' (i.e., to Hel).
- 20 This word is absent from A. The emendation raises the possibility of alliteration with an East Norse, or pre-literary West Norse, form of *Rindr*, namely **Vrindr*. For the story of Váli's birth and avenging of Baldr, see *Vsp.* 32-3.
- 21 The gods' halls were usually located in the west.
- 22 I.e., perhaps, for Baldr. Alternatively, *at muni* might mean 'to their hearts' content'.
- 23 Possibly a term for the lower parts of women's head-dresses or for ships' sails, here used *pars pro toto*.
- 24 Óðinn's question is obscure. The answer might be 'waves'—elsewhere personified as daughters of Ægir—which will toss their white (metaphorical) hoods or Baldr's funeral ship. Or perhaps, as with another question asked by Óðinn in *Vm.* 54, the question is unanswerable, and it is this that betrays his identity. Óðinn asks a similar riddling question, to which the answer is 'waves', in the *Gátur Gestumblindi* 'Riddles of Gestumblindi', part of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*. Cf. Óðinn's question about the identity of 'maidens who travel over the sea' in *Vm.* 48.
- 25 Or *gautr* 'sacrifice'. Cf. *BDr.* 2.
- 26 Perhaps the giantess Angrboða, mother by Loki of three monstrous children: Hel, Fenrir and Jörmungandr. But Loki himself has also been suggested, perhaps disguised as the giantess Þókk.
- 27 Or perhaps 'victorious'. Either way, the tone is sardonic.
- 28 Perhaps emend *er* 'when' to *unz* 'until'.
- 29 Loki, whom the gods bound as punishment for instigating Baldr's death, will escape his bonds at Ragnarok. Cf. *Vsp.* 34, 49.

Rígsþula

Rígsþula (*Rþ.*) ‘Rígr’s List’, a poem in *fornyrðislag*, survives on pages 155–56 of the mid-fourteenth-century Icelandic Codex Wormianus (W) (AM 242 fol.), one of the manuscripts containing Snorri’s *Prose Edda*, where it seems to be missing both its ending and some earlier lines.¹ Its date and place of composition are uncertain. As usual for Eddic poems, Iceland is a possible country of origin, but a less likely one than in many other cases, because the social stratification described in *Rþ.*—aspects of which have ancient Indo-European cultural precedents—did not characterize medieval Iceland, which had no aristocracy and was subject to no king until 1262. Some degree of Irish influence is indicated by the otherwise unattested theonym *Rígr*, which probably derives from a declined form of Old Irish *rí* ‘king’. This might favour an origin in a Hiberno-Norse settlement in the British Isles, where tripartite social stratification might be found, but there was also medieval Irish influence on Iceland and Norway, for example.

The general purpose of *Rþ.* seems clear, albeit now highly distasteful, in its unashamed classism, ageism, sexism and racism. It is to affirm the poet’s (or his or her patron’s) view of the proper stratification of society into in-bred classes, from the uppermost of which—a class of young, fair-haired martial noblemen—stems the king. Beneath the nobles are the less refined, free peasant farmers and, at the bottom of the heap, the ugly, dark-skinned slaves who do the dirty farmwork and whose names sometimes attribute them physical deformity.

If the chronological progression from great-grandparents (slaves) to grandparents (freemen) and then parents (nobles) hints at the possibility of social advancement down the generations, the poet was certainly not at pains to emphasize it. His focus is on promulgating a racist ideology that distinguishes groups of human beings based on pigmentation and other physical features, presenting them as genealogically distinct from one another, and decreeing for them permanent places in a class hierarchy. A narrower aim was apparently to justify the king’s authority, which was won through slaughter and the possession of numinous knowledge about runes. The character Konr has runic knowledge superior even to that of his father Jarl, so that, even though he is

¹ Images of the manuscript are available at ‘AM 242 fol.’, <http://www.e-pages.dk/ku/621>; see also *Codex Wormianus (The Younger Edda)* MS. No. 242 fol. in *The Arnamagnæan Collection in the University Library of Copenhagen with an Introduction by Sigurður Nordal*, Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevi II (Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1931).

the youngest son, Konr becomes worthier of the title of *Rígr* than the man whom the deity himself had sired, acknowledged, leant his name to, and instructed.

It is curious that the deity in question is, ostensibly at least, Heimdallr, a figure better known as the gods' watchman against the incursions of giants. As it stands, *Rþ.* is the only surviving Old Norse text of substantial length to feature Heimdallr as its main character; there was, however, once another poem about him, as *SneGylf* (27, p. 26) includes a fragment of an otherwise lost *Heimdalargaldr* 'Heimdallr's Incantation'. Furthermore, Heimdallr's importance at a fairly early date is probably indicated by his likely identity with the world-tree Yggdrasill (*Heimdallr* could mean '(Burgeoning) Home-Tree') and his probable depiction on the tenth-century Gosforth Cross from Cumbria, England, amid carvings likely to have been inspired by mythological Eddic poems. However, were it not for the prose introduction to *Rþ.*, which is the only part of the text to name Heimdallr, we would probably be inclined to identify the deity who calls himself *Rígr* as Óðinn. For it is elsewhere Óðinn who is the wandering god of aliases and wisdom, including runes, and of kings. It is elsewhere also Óðinn who visits farmsteads and who is called *Aldafoðr* 'Father of Men/Ages' and *Alfoðr* 'All-Father'. One scholar has argued that the prose introduction equating *Rígr* with Heimdallr was composed in the fourteenth century by the compiler of Codex Wormianus,² who possibly took his cue from Heimdallr's progenitorship of 'greater and lesser sons' (presumably men of different classes) in *Vsp.* 1 and perhaps this god's kinship with dynasties in *Hdl.* 43. If so, *Rþ.* would not be a source of traditional information about Heimdallr.

On the other hand, *Rígr*'s offers of help in settings of domestic labour in *Rþ.*, and perhaps especially his advice to the distaff-wielding Amma of stanza 16, might find parallel in an obscure eleventh- or twelfth-century inscription in Norse runes on a spindle-whorl from Saltfleetby St Clement, England.³ It seems to name Heimdallr, possibly beside Óðinn and one other figure, as helpers of a certain Úlfljót, most likely the woman who used the whorl. Óðinn was a practitioner of the type of feminine magic called *seiðr*, literally 'cord, string', which seems to have been conceptually 'spun'. Heimdallr is elsewhere obscurely called *Hallinskiði* 'Leaning Stick', a term which might identify him as the world-tree or *axis mundi*, but which would also aptly describe a distaff—the wooden stick, held at an angle, from which the whorl would have hung.⁴

2 See K. G. Johansson, 'Rígsþula och Codex Wormianus: Textens funktion ur ett kompilationsperspektiv', *alvíssmál* 8 (1998), 67–84.

3 On this artefact, see A. Daubney, 'LIN-D92A22 an Early Medieval Spindle Whorl', *Portable Antiquities Scheme* (2010), <http://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/409249>; J. Hines, 'A Glimpse of the Heathen Norse in Lincolnshire', in E. Cambridge and J. Hawkes, ed., *Crossing Boundaries: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Art, Material Culture, Language and Literature of the Early Medieval World: Essays Presented to Professor Emeritus Richard N. Bailey, OBE, on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2017), pp. 118–26; J. Jesch, 'Further Thoughts on E18 Saltfleetby', *Futhark: International Journal of Runic Studies* 9–10 (2018–19), 201–13.

4 For illustrations, see E. Heide, 'Spinning *seiðr*', in A. Andrén, K. Jennbert and C. Raudvere, ed., *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes, and Interactions: An International Conference in*

Synopsis

Prose: According to ancient tales, the god Heimdallr went travelling on green ways. He advanced along a seashore and came to a farmstead, where he called himself *Rígr* 'King'.

Verse: Long ago, the mighty and wise god Rígr went walking (1). He came to the farmstead of *Ái* 'Great-Grandfather' and *Edda* 'Great-Grandmother', who wore an old-fashioned head-dress (2). Rígr sat between them and offered advice (3). Edda brought basic food, after which Rígr went to bed (4). He lay between them in the bed (5), and left three nights later (6). Nine months later, Edda bore a swarthy-skinned child called *Þraell* 'Slave' (7), a boy of coarse appearance (8) who set about his labouring (9). An ugly girl called *Pír* '(Female) Slave' arrived (10), and sat, talked and worked with Þraell (11). The pair had twelve sons with unprepossessing names, who did manual work around the farm (12). They also had nine daughters with names similarly denoting unattractive attributes (13).

This sequence of events is repeated, but one step higher up the social scale (with superior housing, physical appearance, clothing, food and work), at the dwelling of *Afi* 'Grandfather' and *Amma* 'Grandmother', who conceived by Rígr (or by her husband, with Rígr's intimate assistance) and gave birth to a son, *Karl* 'Peasant Farmer', who, in turn, sired twelve sons and ten daughters with respectable names (14–25). Rígr then went on to the still more elevated household of *Faðir* 'Father' and *Móðir* 'Mother', who conceived by Rígr (or by her husband, with Rígr's intimate assistance) a single vigorous, fair-haired, warlike son, *Jarl* 'Earl' (26–35).

Rígr taught Jarl runes, named him *Rígr*, declared him his son, and urged him to claim his rightful lands (36). The young man proceeded to do so by fighting (37), and distributed wealth to his people (38). He requested the hand of *Erna* 'Vigorous One', daughter of *Hersir* 'Chieftain', and the pair settled into married life (39–40). They had twelve noble, warlike sons (no daughters are mentioned), the youngest of whom was *Konr* 'Scion' (41–42). Young Konr (*Konr ungr*, which puns on *konungr* 'king') knew runes, had magical abilities and possessed the strength of eight men (43–44). He debated runes with his father, Ríg-Jarl, proved himself superior, and earned the right to use the title of *Rígr* himself and to understand (or teach?) runes (45).

Konr rode out to hunt birds (46), but a crow told him it would be more fitting to kill men (47). The crow then identified Danr and Danpr, possibly as noblemen for him to defeat (48).

The rest of the poem is lost.

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Rígsþula

Svá segja menn í fornum sögum, at einnhverr af Ásum, sá er Heimdallr hét, fór ferðar sinnar ok fram með sjóvarströndu nøkkurri, kom at einum húsabœ ok nefndisk Rígr. Eptir þeiri sögu er kvæði þetta:

1. Ár, kváðu, ganga grœnar brautir
 qflgan ok aldinn, Ás kunnigan,
 ramman ok røskvan — Ríg stiganda.
2. Gekk hann meirr at þat miðrar brautar;
 kom hann at húsi, hurð var á gætti;
 inn nam at ganga, eldr var á gólfí;
 hjón sátu þar hár at árni,
 Ái ok Edda aldinfalda.
3. Rígr kunni þeim ráð at segja;
 meirr settisk hann miðra fletja,
 en á hlið hvára hjón salkynna.
4. Þá tók Edda økkvinn hleif,
 þungan ok þykkan, þprunginn sáðum;
 bar hon meirr at þat miðra skutla,
 soð var í bolla, setti á bjóð;
 var kálfr soðinn, krása beztr;
 reis hann upp þaðan, rézk at sofna.
5. Rígr kunni þeim ráð at segja;
 meirr lagðisk hann miðrar rekkju
 en á hlið hvára hjón salkynna.
6. Þar var hann at þat þríar nætr saman;
 gekk hann meirr at þat miðrar brautar;
 liðu meirr at þat mánuðr níu.
7. Jóð ól Edda, jósu vatni
 hörunsvartan, hétu Þrael.
8. Hann nam at vaxa ok vel dafna;
 var þar á höndum hrokkit skinn,
 kropnir knúar, . . .
 fingr digrir, fúlligt andlit,
 lotr hryggr, langir hælar.

Rígr's List

People say thus in ancient stories, that a certain one of the *Æsir*, the one who was called Heimdallr, went on his travels and, advancing along a certain sea-strand,¹ came to a farmstead and named himself Rígr.² This poem is based on that story:

1. Early,³ they said, there walked on green ways,⁴
mighty and ancient, a knowing Áss,⁵
strong and vigorous — Rígr, striding.
2. He walked on then, after that, in the middle of the way;
he came to a house, the door was at the door-frame,⁶
he proceeded to go inside, a fire was on the floor;
a married couple sat there, hoary,⁷ at the hearth,
Ái⁸ and Edda⁹ in an old-fashioned head-dress.
3. Rígr knew how to give¹⁰ them advice;¹¹
he sat himself then in the middle of the benches,¹²
and on either side [of him were] the married couple of the household.
4. Then Edda took a coarse loaf,
heavy and thick, bursting with husks;¹³
she carried it then into the midst of the dishes;
broth was in a bowl, she set it on the table;¹⁴
a calf had been boiled, the best of delicacies;
he rose up from there, decided to go to sleep.¹⁵
5. Rígr knew how to give them advice;
he laid himself down then in the middle of the bed,
and on either side [of him were] the married couple of the household.
6. He was there after that for three nights altogether;
he walked on then, after that, in the middle of the way;
then nine months passed after that.
7. Edda bore a child, they sprinkled the swarthy-skinned one
with water,¹⁶ called him Þræll.¹⁷
8. He began to grow and to thrive well;
there was wrinkled skin on his hands,
gnarled knuckles, . . .¹⁸
thick fingers, ugly face,
crooked back, long heels.

9. Nam hann meirr at þat magns um kosta,
bast at binda, byrðar görva;
bar hann heim at þat hrís gerstan dag.
10. Þar kom at garði gengilbeina;
aurr var á iljum, armr sólbrunninn,
niðrbjúgt er nef, nefndisk Þír.
11. Miðra fletja meirr settisk hon;
sat hjá henni sonr húss,
rœddu ok rýndu, rekkju görðu,
Þræll ok Þir, þrungin dœgr.
12. Þórn ólu þau, bjuggu ok unðu;
hygg ek at héti Hreimr ok Fjósnir,
Klúrr ok Kleggi, Kefsir, Fúlnir,
Drumbr, Digraldi, Drötr ok Hösvir,
Lútr ok Leggjaldi; lögðu garða,
akra tøddu, unnu at svínum,
geita gættu, grófu torf.
13. Dœtr váru þær Drumba ok Kumba,
Økkvinkálfa ok Arinnejfa,
Ysja ok Ambátt, Eikintjasna,
Tótrughypja ok Trónubeina;
þaðan eru komnar þræla ættir.
14. Gekk Rígr at þat réttar brautir,
kom hann at *hollu*, hurð var á skíði;
inn nam at ganga, eldr var á gólfí,
hjón sátu þar, heldu á sýslu.
15. Maðr telgði þar meið til rifjar;
var skegg skapat, skor var fyr enni,
skyrtu þróngva; skokkr var á gólfí.
16. Sat þar kona, sveigði rokk,
breiddi faðm, bjó til váðar;
sveigr var á hófði, smokkr var á bringu,
dúkr var á hálsi, dvergar á oxlum.
Afi ok Amma áttu hús.
17. Rígr kunni þeim ráð at segja;
.....
18.

9. After that he started to test his strength,
to bind bast, prepare burdens;
after that he bore home brushwood the entire day.
10. There came to the yard a crook-legged one;
there was mud on her soles, her arm was sunburnt,
her nose is turned down,¹⁹ she named herself Þír.²⁰
11. She sat herself then in the middle of the benches;
beside her sat the son of the house,
they talked and whispered, made the bed,
Þræll and Þír, day after tightly packed day.
12. They bore children, settled down and were content;
I think they²¹ were called Hreimr²² and Fjósnir,²³
Klúrr²⁴ and Kleggi,²⁵ Kefsir,²⁶ Fúlnir,²⁷
Drumbr,²⁸ Digraldi,²⁹ Drøttr³⁰ and Hösvir,³¹
Lútr³² and Leggjaldi,³³ they laid fences,
dunged fields, tended to swine,
attended to goats, dug turf.³⁴
13. The daughters were Drumba³⁵ and Kumba,³⁶
Økkvinkálfa³⁷ and Arinnefja,³⁸
Ysjá³⁹ and Ambátt,⁴⁰ Eikintjasna,⁴¹
Tótrughypja⁴² and Trønubeina,⁴³
from them have come families of slaves.
14. After that Rígr walked on right⁴⁴ ways,
he came to a hall, the door was on the lintel,⁴⁵
he proceeded to go inside, a fire was on the floor,
a married couple sat there, they stuck to their work.
15. The man carved wood there for a weaving-beam;
his beard was well-groomed, his hair lay on his forehead,⁴⁶
[he wore] a close-fitting shirt; a chest was on the floor.
16. The woman sat there, twirled a distaff,
readied thread(?),⁴⁷ prepared [it?] for [making] cloth;
a curved head-dress was on her head, a smock was on her breast,
a cloth was at her neck, 'dwarves'⁴⁸ at her shoulders.
Afi⁴⁹ and Amma⁵⁰ owned the house.
17. Rígr knew how to give them advice;
...⁵¹
18.⁵²

19. Reis frá borði, réð at sofna;
 meirr lagðisk hann miðrar rekkju,
 en á hlið hvára hjón salkynna.
20. Þar var hann at þat þrjár nætr saman;
 gekk hann meirr at þat miðrar brautar;
 liðu meirr at þat mánuðr níu.
21. Jóð ól Amma, jósu vatni,
 kólluðu Karl, kona sveip ripti,
 rauðan ok rjóðan, riðuðu augu.
22. Hann nam at vaxa ok vel dafna;
 öxn nam at temja, arðr at gørva,
 hús at timbra ok hlóður smíða,
 karta at gørva ok keyra plóg.
23. Heim óku þá hanginluklu,
 geitakyrtlu, giptu Karli;
 Snær heitir sú; settisk undir ripti;
 bjuggu hjón, bauga deildu,
 breiddu blæjur ok bú gørðu.
24. Þorð ólu þau, bjuggu ok unðu;
 hét Halr ok Drengr, Hauldr, Þegn ok Smiðr,
 Breiðr, Bóndi, Bundinskeggi,
 Búi ok Boddi, Brattskeggr ok Seggr.
25. En hétu svá qðrum nöfnum:
 Snót, Brúðr, Svanni, Svarri, Sprakki,
 Fljóð, Sprund ok Víf, Feima, Ristill;
 þaðan eru komnar karla ættir.
26. Gekk Rígr þaðan réttar brautir;
 kom hann at sal, suðr horfðu dyrr,
 var hurð hnigin, hringr var í gætti.
27. Gekk hann inn at þat, gólf var stráð;
 sátu hjón, sásks í augu,
 Faðir ok Móðir, fingrum at leika.
28. Sat húsgumi ok sneri streng,
 álm of bendi, orvar skepti;
 en húskona hugði at ormum,
 strauk of ripti, sterti ermar.

19. He⁵³ rose from the table, decided to go to sleep;
 then he laid himself down in the middle of the bed,
 and on either side [of him were] the married couple of the household.
20. He was there after that for three nights altogether;
 he walked then, after that, in the middle of the way;
 then nine months passed after that.
21. Amma bore a child, they sprinkled him with water,
 called him Karl,⁵⁴ the woman wrapped him in linen cloth,
 the red⁵⁵ and ruddy [boy], his eyes darted here and there.
22. He began to grow and to thrive well;
 he began to tame oxen, to prepare a plough,
 to build houses and to make barns,
 to prepare carts and to drive a plough.
23. They drove home then the one with hanging keys,⁵⁶
 the goatskin-kirtled one, married her to Karl;
 she's called Snor;⁵⁷ she sat herself down beneath a [bridal] veil;
 the married couple settled down, distributed arm-rings,
 spread bed-covers and set up a household.
24. They bore children, settled down and were content;
 they were called Halr⁵⁸ and Drengr,⁵⁹ Hauldr,⁶⁰ Þegn⁶¹ and Smiðr,⁶²
 Breiðr,⁶³ Bóndi,⁶⁴ Bundinskeggi,⁶⁵
 Búi⁶⁶ and Boddi,⁶⁷ Brattskeggi⁶⁸ and Seggr.⁶⁹
25. And they also named [their daughters] by other names, thus:
 Snót,⁷⁰ Brúðr,⁷¹ Svanni,⁷² Svarri,⁷³ Sprakki,⁷⁴
 Fljóð,⁷⁵ Sprund⁷⁶ and Víf,⁷⁷ Feima,⁷⁸ Ristill,⁷⁹
 from them have come families of peasant farmers.
26. Rígr walked from there on right ways;
 he came to a hall, the entrance faced south,
 the door was ajar, a ring was in the door-post(?).⁸⁰
27. He walked inside after that, the floor was strewn,⁸¹
 a married couple was sitting [there], they looked in each other's eyes,
 Faðir⁸² and Móðir⁸³ played with [each other's] fingers.
28. The house-man⁸⁴ sat and twisted a bowstring,
 bent an elm-bow, put shafts on arrows;
 and the house-woman⁸⁵ thought about her arms,
 stroked her linen robe, smoothed the sleeves.

29. Keisti fald, kinga var á bringu,
síðar slœður, serk bláfán;
brún bjartari, brjóst ljósara,
háls hvítari hreinni mjøllu.
30. Rígr kunni þeim ráð at segja;
meirr settisk hann miðra fletja
en á hlið hvára hjón salkynna.
31. Þá tók Móðir merktan dúk,
hvítan af hörvi, hulði bjóð;
hon tók at þat hleifa þunna,
hvíta af hveiti, ok hulði dúk.
32. Fram setti hon skutla fulla,
silfri varða, setti á bjóð,
fán ok fleski ok fugla steikta;
vín var í könnu, varðir kálkar,
drukku ok dœmðu, dagr var á sinnum.
33. Rígr kunni þeim ráð at segja;
reis Rigr at þat, rekkju gerði;
þar var hann at þat þrjár nætr saman;
gekk hann meirr at þat miðrar brautar;
liðu meirr at þat mánuðr níu.
34. Svein ól Móðir, silki vafði,
jósu vatni, Jarl létu heita;
bleikt var hár, bjartir vangar,
otul váru augu sem yrmlingi.
35. Upp óx þar Jarl á fletjum;
lind nam at skelfa, leggja strengi,
álm at beygja, orvar skepta,
flein at fleygja, frókkur dýja,
hestum ríða, hundum verpa,
sverðum bregða, sund at fremja.
36. Kom þar ór runni Rígr gangandi,
Rígr gangandi, rúnar kendi;
sitt gaf heiti, son kvezk eiga;
þann bað hann eignask óðalvøllu,
óðalvøllu, aldnar byggðir.

29. She straightened(?) her head-dress, a medallion was on her breast,
 [she wore] a long-trained dress, a blue-coloured shirt;
 her brow [was] brighter, her breast lighter,
 her neck whiter than pure, freshly fallen snow.
30. Rígr knew how to give them advice;
 he sat himself then in the middle of the bench,
 and on either side [of him were] the married couple of the household.
31. Then Móðir took a decorated cloth,
 white, made of linen, [and] covered the table;
 after that she took thin loaves,
 white, made from wheat, and covered the cloth.
32. She brought forth full dishes,
 ornamented with silver, set on the table
 streaked bacon(?) and pork and roasted birds;
 there was wine was in a flagon, ornamented goblets;
 they drank and discoursed, the day was ending.
33. Rígr knew how to offer them advice;
 Rígr rose after that, prepared the bed;
 he was there after that for three nights altogether;
 he walked on then, after that, in the middle of the way;
 then nine months passed after that.
34. Móðir bore a boy, wrapped him in silk;
 they sprinkled him with water, had him named Jarl,⁸⁶
 his hair was flaxen, his cheeks bright,
 his eyes were as terrible as a snakeling.
35. Jarl grew up there at the benches;
 he began to shake a shield, to string a bow,
 to bend an elm-bow, to put shafts on arrows,
 to let arrow⁸⁷ fly, to brandish spears,
 to ride horses, to loose hounds,
 to wield swords, to practise swimming.
36. From a thicket⁸⁸ there came Rígr walking,
 Rígr walking, he taught [him]⁸⁹ runes,⁹⁰
 gave him his own name,⁹¹ says he has [in him] a son;
 he invited him to claim as his own ancestral fields,
 ancestral fields, ancient settlements.

37. Reið hann meirr þaðan myrkan við,
 hélug fjöll, unz at höllu kom;
 skapt nam at dýja, skelfði lind,
 hesti hleypti ok hjörvi brá;
 víg nam at vekja, voll nam at rjóða,
 val nam at fella, vá til landa.
38. Réð hann einn at þat átján búum;
 auð nam skipta, qllum veita
 meiðmar ok mósma, mara svangrifja;
 hringum hreytti, hjó sundr baug.
39. Óku ærir úrgar brautir,
 kómú at höllu þar er Hersir bjó;
 mætti hann mjófingraðri,
 hvítri ok horskri — hétu Ernu.
40. Báðu hennar ok heim óku,
 giptu Jarli, gekk hon und líni;
 saman bjuggu þau ok sér unðu,
 ættir jóku ok aldrs nutu.
41. Burr var hinn elzti, en Barn annat,
 Jóð ok Aðal, Arfi, Mogr,
 Niðr ok Niðjungr — námu leika —
 Sonr ok Sveinn — sund ok tafl —
 Kundr hét einn, Konr var hinn yngsti.
42. Upp óxu þar Jarli bornir,
 hesta tómðu, hlifar bendu,
 skeyti skófu, skelfðu aska.
43. En Konr ungr kunni rúnar,
 ævinrúnar ok aldrrúnar;
 meirr kunni hann mönnum bjarga,
 eggjar deyfa, ægi lægja.
44. Klök nam fugla, kyrra elda,
 sæva of svefja, sorgir lægja;
 afl ok eljun átta manna.
45. Hann við Ríg-Jarl rúnar deildi,
 brögðum beitti ok betr kunni;
 þá qðlaðisk ok þá eiga gat
 Rígr at heita, rúnar kunna.

37. He⁹² rode then from there through murky forest,⁹³
hoar-frosted mountains, until he came to a hall;
he began to brandish⁹⁴ his spear-shaft, he shook his shield,
he spurred his horse to leap and drew his sword;
he began to waken war, he began to redder the field,
he began to fell warriors, he won lands by fighting.
38. He alone ruled after that eighteen estates;
he began to distribute wealth, to grant to all
treasures and gems(?), slender-ribbed steeds;
he scattered rings, hewed an arm-ring asunder.⁹⁵
39. Messengers drove over moist ways,
came to the hall where Hersir⁹⁶ lived;
he⁹⁷ met a slender-fingered [maid],
white and wise — they⁹⁸ called her Erna.⁹⁹
40. They asked for her¹⁰⁰ and drove her home,
gave her to Jarl, she went under linen;¹⁰¹
they settled down together and were content with themselves,
increased their families¹⁰² and enjoyed life.
41. Burr¹⁰³ was the eldest, and Barn¹⁰⁴ the second,
Jóð¹⁰⁵ and Aðal,¹⁰⁶ Arfi,¹⁰⁷ Moðr,¹⁰⁸
Niðr¹⁰⁹ and Niðjungr¹¹⁰ — they learnt how to play —
Sonr¹¹¹ and Sveinn¹¹² — at swimming and ‘table’¹¹³ —
one was called Kundr,¹¹⁴ Konr¹¹⁵ was the youngest.
42. [Those boys] born to Jarl grew up there,
they broke in horses, put bands on shields,
scraped arrow-shafts smooth, shook ash-spears.
43. But young Konr¹¹⁶ knew runes,
everlasting(?) -runes and life-runes;¹¹⁷
more [than that], he knew how to save men,
blunt edges,¹¹⁸ calm the sea.
44. He learnt [to understand] the chirping of birds, [how] to calm fires,
put seas to sleep,¹¹⁹ allay sorrows;
[he had]¹²⁰ the strength and endurance of eight men.
45. He disputed about runes with Ríg-Jarl,¹²¹
teased him with tricks and knew better;
then he obtained [victory] for himself and got the right
to be called Rígr, to comprehend runes.¹²²

46. Reið Konr ungr kjørr ok skóga,
 kólfi fleygði, kyrði fugla.
47. Þá kvað þat kraka — sat kvisti ein:
'Hvat skaltu, Konr ungr, kyrra fugla?
 Heldr mætti þér hestum ríða
 ok her fella!
48. 'Á Danr ok Danpr dyrar hallir,
 œðra óðal en ér hafið;
 þeir kunnu vel kjól at ríða,
 egg at kenna, undir rjúfa.'

46. Young Konr rode through thickets and forests,
 let fly with heavy arrow, silenced birds.
47. Then a crow said this — it sat alone on a branch:
 'Why must you, young Konr, silence birds?
 You could rather be riding horses
 ¹²³ and felling an army!
48. 'Danr and Danpr¹²⁴ own costly halls,
 nobler inherited properties than you possess;
 they know well how to ride in a long ship,
 acquaint [others with] the edge,¹²⁵ inflict wounds.¹²⁶

Textual Apparatus to *Rígsþula*

Rígsþula] This poem is untitled in W. The title *Rígsþula* derives from a fragment of parchment bound into W, on which is written *þreala heiti standa í Rígs þulu* '(poetic) names of slaves are present in Rígr's list' (Dronke, *Poetic Edda*, II, 208 n.96).

1/1 *Ár*] W At

2/8 *at*] W af

2/9 *Edda*] W ellda

4/2 *økkvinn hleif*] W økuinnleif

7/3 *hørundsvartan*] W hørfi svartan

10/3 *aurr*] W orrr

11/4 *húss*] W huus

14/3 *at høllu*] W at followed by a mark of insertion

17/3] W has no indication of omission

18] W has no indication of omission

20/3–4] W absent

32/4 *setti á bjøð*] W abjqð

35/7 *fleygja*] W fleyia

391/1 *Óku*] W Oku with a macron over the -u

39/6 *mjófingraðri*] W miofingraði

48/4 *ér*] W þer

Notes to the Translation

- 1 In view of subsequent events, it may be no coincidence that the first man and woman were found on the shore, according to *Vsp.* 17. Heimdallr himself may well have been born at the seashore; cf. *Hdl.* 35.
- 2 Probably a borrowing of Old Irish *rí* (gen. sg. *ríg*) 'king'. In view of Heimdallr's walking, successive sexual encounters and likely identity with the world-tree, a pun on ON *rígr* 'stiffness' is possible; cf. *Ls.* 48 footnote 124. The identification Heimdallr-Rígr is found only here.
- 3 I.e., in early days.
- 4 The green ways are suggestive of fertility.
- 5 (Heathen) god.
- 6 Although the precise interpretation of the poet's door-terminology is unclear, it seems likely that at each house Rígr visits the door is open, but that the technological means of opening advances each time, in keeping with the higher status of the household. Here, at the bottom of the social hierarchy, it appears that the door has simply been lifted from the doorframe and placed beside it.

- 7 I.e., grey-haired.
- 8 'Great-Grandfather'.
- 9 'Great-Grandmother'.
- 10 Literally, 'say', 'tell'.
- 11 ON *ráð* can also mean 'marriage', '(unmarried) sexual union', 'household' and 'state of life'.
- 12 Literally, the raised platform along the wall, where benches were placed.
- 13 Or 'seeds'.
- 14 Or 'on a serving platter'.
- 15 I.e., Rígr decided to go to bed. The preceding line about a boiled calf is perhaps misplaced.
- 16 A heathen ritual; its relation, if any, to Christian baptism is unclear.
- 17 'Slave'.
- 18 A half-line seems to have been lost here.
- 19 I.e., hooked.
- 20 '(Female) Slave'.
- 21 I.e., the children.
- 22 'Bawler'.
- 23 'Byre (Boy)'.
- 24 'Bungler'.
- 25 'Cleg', i.e., 'Horse-Fly', or 'Haycock'.
- 26 'Concubine(?)'.
- 27 'Stinker'.
- 28 'Log'.
- 29 'Stout One'.
- 30 'Lubber'.
- 31 'Grizzled'.
- 32 'Stooper'.
- 33 'Leggy'.
- 34 I.e., for peat.
- 35 'Stumpy'.
- 36 'Chunky'.
- 37 'Thick Calves'.
- 38 'Eagle Nose'.
- 39 'Noisy One'.
- 40 'Handmaiden'.
- 41 'Oaken Peg'.
- 42 'Tattered Dress'.
- 43 'Crane Legs'.
- 44 I.e., straight and/or morally correct.

- 45 This seems to mean that the door has been opened by lifting it to rest on the lintel-beam to which it is attached by ropes or chains.
- 46 I.e., it was cut straight across at the brows.
- 47 Alternatively, perhaps, 'spread out her arms'.
- 48 I.e., fibulae, shoulder-clasps.
- 49 'Grandfather'.
- 50 'Grandmother'.
- 51 The rest of this stanza is missing. Presumably, Rígr sat himself in the middle of the benches, with the married couple of the household on either side of him.
- 52 A stanza is probably missing here.
- 53 I.e., Rígr.
- 54 'Man (of Low Rank)', 'Peasant Farmer'.
- 55 I.e., red-haired.
- 56 I.e., hanging from her belt.
- 57 'Daughter-in-Law'.
- 58 'Man'.
- 59 'Fine Fellow'.
- 60 Or *Hplðr*. The name means 'Freeholder'.
- 61 'Thane'.
- 62 'Smith'.
- 63 'Broad One'.
- 64 'Farmer'.
- 65 'Bound Beard'.
- 66 'Dweller' or 'Neighbour'.
- 67 'Householder(?)'.
- 68 'Steep Beard'.
- 69 'Man', 'Warrior'.
- 70 'Woman'.
- 71 'Bride'.
- 72 '(Swan?/Slim?/Forceful?) Woman'.
- 73 'Proud Woman'.
- 74 'Sparky'.
- 75 'Woman'.
- 76 'Woman'.
- 77 'Woman', 'Wife'.
- 78 'Shy Girl'.
- 79 'Sharp/Cutting Woman(?)'.
- 80 Although the interpretation is somewhat uncertain, this might be a familiar hinged door with a knocker. At least, this door appears more advanced than those of the households Rígr visited earlier.

- 81 I.e., with straw.
- 82 'Father'.
- 83 'Mother'.
- 84 I.e., the master of the house.
- 85 I.e., the mistress of the house.
- 86 'Earl'.
- 87 Or 'javelin'.
- 88 Perhaps a memory of Heimdallr's identification with the world-tree, from which it is likely that Óðinn learnt runes (*Háv.* 138–39).
- 89 I.e., Jarl.
- 90 Or 'secrets'.
- 91 I.e., *Rígr*, apparently as a prefix, to judge from *Rþ.* 45.
- 92 I.e., Jarl.
- 93 Possibly a reference to *Myrkviðr* 'Mirkwood'.
- 94 Or simply, 'he brandished'.
- 95 I.e., to distribute the pieces as wealth to his noblemen.
- 96 'Chieftain', ruler of a district.
- 97 Jarl/Rígr, if he travelled with the messengers. But a mistake for *mættu* 'they met' seems more likely.
- 98 Presumably the people who lived there, not the messengers.
- 99 'Vigorous One'.
- 100 I.e., for her hand in marriage to Jarl.
- 101 I.e., she donned a bridal veil.
- 102 I.e., they had children.
- 103 'Son', 'Boy'.
- 104 'Child'.
- 105 'Child'.
- 106 '(Noble) Nature'.
- 107 'Heir'.
- 108 'Boy'.
- 109 'Kinsman'.
- 110 'Descendant'.
- 111 'Son'.
- 112 'Youth', 'Boy'.
- 113 *Hnefatafl* or a similar board game.
- 114 'Close Kin'.
- 115 'Scion'.
- 116 There is a pun on *konungr* 'king'.
- 117 Both these nouns mean literally 'life-runes'; the distinction between them is obscure.

- 118 I.e., the edges of weapons.
- 119 I.e., to calm seas.
- 120 An omission seems possible here.
- 121 I.e., King Jarl, the name/title *Ríg(r)* ‘King’ having been prefixed to his original name; cf. *Rþ. 36*.
- 122 Perhaps *kunna* ‘to comprehend’ here means in an official, or at least recognized, capacity; alternatively, perhaps *kunna* is a scribal error for *kenna* ‘to teach’. Either way, it is apparently Konr’s superior knowledge of runes, together with his other magical abilities, that gives him the right to succeed his father, despite being the youngest son. We are not explicitly told how Konr came by his knowledge of runes, whether it was innate (perhaps *Rþ. 43* suggests this), or whether it was taught to him by Rígr or Ríg-Jarl.
- 123 A half-line seems to be missing—perhaps *hjórum bregða* ‘drawing swords’.
- 124 Supposed members of the early Danish royal house. Chapter 17 of *Ynglinga saga* identifies King Danpr as a son of Rígr, who was the first to be called *konungr* ‘king’, and whose daughter was sister to King Danr the Proud, after whom *Danmörk* ‘Denmark’ was named. A Latin summary of the lost *Skjöldunga saga* ‘Saga of the Sköldungar’ identifies Rigus (i.e., ON *Rígr*) as a great man who married the daughter of Danp (i.e., *Danpr*), by whom he had a son called Dan.
- 125 I.e., the edge of a sword or other weapon.
- 126 Any further stanzas that once existed are lost, but Konr presumably went on to succeed Jarl.

Hyndluljóð

Hyndluljóð (*Hdl.*) ‘The Song of Hyndla’ survives in the late-fourteenth-century Icelandic *Flateyjarbók* ‘Book of Flatey’, fol. 2v–3r.¹ *SnEGylf* quotes a variant version of st. 33, which it attributes to *Völuspá hin skamma* ‘The Short *Völuspá*’. From this, it seems either that *Hdl.* was known to Snorri as *Völuspá hin skamma* or that *Völuspá hin skamma* was a distinct poem (or series of stanzas) which has been incorporated, with some adaptation, into the surviving text of *Hdl.* Many scholars believe the latter and identify *Völuspá hin skamma* as *Hdl.* 29–44.

Hdl. is composed in *fornyrðislag*. Its date and place of composition are uncertain. It displays knowledge of heathen mythological traditions, by referring, for example, to Ragnarok (42), Heimdallr (35, 37–38, 43), the offspring of Loki (40–41), and events such as the death of Baldr (29) and Freyr’s marriage to Gerðr (30). But *Hdl.* 44 might indicate an awareness of Christ, which could suggest a post-Conversion date (many scholars favour the twelfth century), assuming this stanza is not a late accretion—it could be removed without damaging the poem’s flow. The genealogies in *Hdl.* which list human ancestors indicate both Danish and Norwegian connections.

Hdl. is the only surviving Eddic poem to feature the goddess Freyja, sister of Freyr, as a main character. She does, however, play briefer parts in other poems, notably *Brk.* and *Ls.* Her reputation for sexual impropriety and promiscuity (cf. *Ls.* 32) is underlined by the giantess Hyndla’s repeated likening of her, in *Hdl.*, to a she-goat who runs around at night with billy-goats. The audience’s appreciation of a sexual dimension to Freyja’s riding of a boar whom Hyndla calls Freyja’s *verr* ‘man/husband’ (*Hdl.* 6) might have been heightened by knowledge that the goddess was also called *Sýr* ‘Sow’,² although *Hdl.* does not mention this name.

The identity of Freyja’s mount in *Hdl.*, a man called Óttarr who has taken the form of a boar, is uncertain. He may be purely fictional. There is, however, a possibility that he represents Óttarr birtingr, a Norwegian of humble birth who married Ingiríðr Rognvaldsdóttir, widow of the Norwegian King Harald Gilli, and who was killed in

¹ Flatey is an island in Breiðafjörður, northwest Iceland. For photographs of the manuscript, see ‘GKS 1005 fol.’, *handrit.is*, <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/GKS02-1005/0#page/n0/mode/2up>, and *Flateyjarbók (Codex Flateyensis)* Ms. No. 1005 fol. in the Old Royal Collection in The Royal Library of Copenhagen with an Introduction by Finnur Jónsson, Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevi I (Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1930).

² E.g., in *SnEGylf* (35, p. 29).

1146. Ingiríðr was the grand-daughter of a Swedish king called *Ing*, a fervent Christian whose name nevertheless points to an ancestral connection with *Ing(v)i/Yngvi*-Freyr, Freyja's brother.

Freyja's reluctant interlocutor, the giantess Hyndla, merits comparison with the seeresses of *Vsp.* and *BDr.*; her interrogative refrain 'Do you want even more?' resembles that of the former. Additionally, Hyndla's implicitly canine aspect (her name means 'Little Bitch'), lupine associations (she owns wolves and, as a likely seeress, might well descend from the *Viðólfr* 'Wood Wolf' of *Hdl.* 33), and possible fieriness ally her with some other Norse giantesses. These include, in the Old English poem *Beowulf*, Grendel's nocturnal mother, with whom she also shares a violent, potentially fiery antagonism to a boar-man associated with the Vanir: Beowulf, the boar-helmeted adversary of Grendel's mother, was the champion of the Danish King Hroðgar, the lord of the *Ingwine* 'Friends of Ing', in which *Ing-* is probably cognate with ON *Ing(v)i/Yngvi(-Freyr)*, Freyja's brother. In *Beowulf* (1192–1218), furthermore, Hroðgar's wife presents Beowulf with a marvellous torc or necklace which the poet compares to the *Brosinga mene* 'torc of the Brosingas', a treasure doubtless closely related to the Old Norse *Brísingamen* 'torc of the Brísingar' possessed by Freyja in *Prk.*

More than one scholar discerns a pagan initiation theme in *Hdl.* Thus one remarks: 'Óttarr should be viewed as a king-to-be, who is to be initiated into kingship ..., and central to this initiation is the acquisition of the knowledge he receives from Hyndla'.³ The initiation of Agnarr by the revelatory utterances of Óðinn in *Grm.* appears comparable in this regard.

Synopsis

Prose: A single sentence introduces 'Hyndla's Song', a poem about Óttarr the Foolish.

Verse: The goddess Freyja wakens the giantess Hyndla at the dead of night (or at Ragnarok) and urges her to ride beside her to Valhöll (1), to request the favour of Óðinn, who bestows gifts on men (2–3). Once there, Freyja will also sacrifice to Þórr, so that he might always be well-disposed to Hyndla (4).

Freyja urges Hyndla to ride one of the giantess's own wolves beside Freyja's boar, but Hyndla rejects this proposal on the basis that the boar is too slow and she does not want to load up her wolf (5). She accuses Freyja of treachery, as Freyja's boar is really Óttarr (6). Freyja denies this by identifying her glowing, golden-bristled boar as Hildisvíni, which was made by two dwarves (7).

Freyja(?) says that they can stay where they are, where they will discuss the lineage of men of divine descent (8). She explains that Óttarr has made a bet with a certain Angantýr (probably his elder brother), and that it is right to help Óttarr win his

³ J. P. Schjødt, 'Eddic Poetry and pre-Christian Scandinavia', in C. Larrington, J. Quinn and B. Schorn, ed., *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 132–46 at 142, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316471685.008>

patrimony (9), especially as he has worshipped her and the other goddesses faithfully (10). She urges Hyndla to begin her enumeration of Óttarr's lineage (11).

Hyndla proceeds to recount Óttarr's relatives (12–44), a listing that includes references to gods, giants and Ragnarok (29–30, 35–44).

Freyja then commands Hyndla to bring her boar a memory-enhancing drink, so that he may repeat it accurately when staking his claim against a certain Angantýr three days hence (45). Hyndla tells her to be off and accuses her of nocturnal promiscuity with billy-goats and of having had multiple sexual partners (46–47). Next, she casts fire at Freyja (or vice versa), and repeats her accusation (48). Hyndla then sees fire and the earth ablaze, observes that most people die, commands that Óttarr be brought a poisoned, cursed drink, and repeats her accusation against Freyja (49). Freyja denies that the giantess's curse has any power, and asks all the gods to help Óttarr (50).

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Hyndluljóð

Hér hefr upp Hyndluljóð, kveðit um Óttar heimska.

1. 'Vaki, mær meyja! Vaki, míν vina,
Hyndla systir, er í helli býr!
Nú er røkkr røkkra, ríða vit skulum
til Valhallar ok til vés heilags!
2. 'Biðjum Herjafþōr í hugum sitja!
Hann geldr ok gefr gull verðugum;
gaf hann Hermóði hjálm ok brynu,
en Sigmundi sverð at þiggja.
3. 'Gefr hann sigr sumum, en sumum aura,
mælsku mórgum, ok manvit firum;
byri gefr hann brögnum, en brag skáldum,
gefr hann mansemi mórgum rekki.
4. 'Pór mun hon blóta, þess mun hon biðja,
at hann æ við þík einart láti,
þó er honum ótítt við jötuns brúðir!
5. 'Nú taktu úlf þinn einn af stalli,
lát hann renna með runa mínum!'
'Seinn er goltr þinn goðveg troða!
Vil ek ei mar minn mætan hlœða!
6. 'Flá ertu, Freyja, er þú freistar mín,
vísar þú augum á oss þannig,
er þú hefr ver þinn í valsinni,
Óttar junga, Innsteins bur!'
7. 'Dulin ertu, Hyndla, draums ætlig þér,
er þú kveðr ver minn í valsinni!
Þar er goltr glóar, gullinbursti,
Hildisvíni, er mér hagir gørðu,
dvergar tveir, Dáinn ok Nabbi.
8. 'Sennum vit ór sǫðlum! Sitja vit skulum
ok um joðra ættir dœma,
gumna þeira er frá goðum kvómu.
9. 'Þeir hafa veðjat Vala málmi,
Óttarr jungi ok Angantýr;
skylt er at veita, svá at skati inn ungi
fóðurleifð hafi eptir frœndr sína.

The Song of Hyndla

Here begins *Hyndluljóð* ['The Song of Hyndla'],¹ told about Óttarr the Foolish.²

1. 'Wake up, girl of girls!³ Wake up, my friend,
sister Hyndla,⁴ who lives in a cave!
Now it's the darkness of darknesses,⁵ we two must ride
to Valhöll⁶ and to the holy sanctuary!
2. 'Let's ask Herjafǫr⁷ to be in good heart!
He hands out gold and gives it to the worthy;
he gave Hermóðr a helm and a mail-coat,⁸
and Sigmundr a sword to receive.⁹
3. 'He gives victory to some, and to some wealth,
eloquence to many, and innate sense to the living;
a fair wind he gives to men,¹⁰ and poetic artistry to poets,
he gives manliness to many a warrior.
4. 'She'll¹¹ sacrifice to Þórr, she'll ask him this,
that he always be well-inclined towards you,
even though that's unusual for him with [regard to] a giant's brides!¹²
5. 'Now take one of your wolves from its stall,¹³
let it run beside my boar!
'Your gelded boar is slow to tread the god-road!¹⁴
I don't want to load up my excellent steed!¹⁵
6. 'You're treacherous, Freyja, when you test me,
[when] you turn your eyes toward us¹⁶ in that way,¹⁷
when you have your man¹⁸ [with you] on the slaughter-road,¹⁹
young Óttarr, Innsteinn's son!²⁰
7. 'You're deluded, Hyndla, I think you're dreaming,
when you say it's my man on the slaughter-road!
There's my glowing gelded boar, golden-bristled,²¹
Hildisvíni,²² which skilful ones made for me,
two dwarves, Dáinn²³ and Nabbi.²⁴
- 8.²⁵ 'Let's dispute out of our saddles! We two shall sit down
and discuss the families of boars,²⁶
of those people who descended from gods.
9. 'They've wagered in metal of the Valir,²⁷
young Óttarr and Angantýr,²⁸
it's proper to help, so that the young warrior²⁹
may have³⁰ his patrimony from his kinsmen.³¹

10. 'Hǫrg hann mér gerði, hlaðinn steinum,
 nú er grjót þat at gleri orðit;
 rauð hann í nýju nauta blóði,
 æ trúði Óttarr á Ásynjur.
11. 'Nú láttu forna niðja talða
 ok upp bornar ættir manna:
 hvat er Skjoldunga, hvat er Skilfinga,
hvat er Auðlinga, hvat er Ylfinga,
 hvat er hǫlðborit, hvat er hersborit,
 mest manna val und Miðgarði!'
12. 'Þú ert, Óttarr, borinn Innsteini,
 en Innsteinn var Álfí inum gamla,
 Álfr var Úlfí, Úlfr Sæfara,
 en Sæfari Svan inum rauða.
13. 'Móður átti faðir þinn menjum gófga;
 hygg ek at hon héti Hlédís gyðja;
 Fróði var faðir þeirar, en Frjaut móðir,
 all þótti ætt sú með yfirmönnum.
14. 'Áli var áðr oflgastr manna,
 Hálfdan fyrri, hæstr Skjoldunga;
 fræg váró fólkvíg, þau er framir gerðu;
 hvarfla þóttu hans verk með himins skautum.
15. 'Eflðisk hann við Eymundr, œztan manna,
 en hann vá Sigtrygg með svöllum eggjum;
 eiga gekk Álmveig, œzta kvinna,
 ólu þau ok áttu átján sonu.
16. 'Þaðan eru Skjoldungar, þaðan eru Skilfingar,
 þaðan Auðlingar, þaðan Ynglingar,
 þaðan hǫlðborit, þaðan hersborit,
 mest manna val und Miðgarði;
 allt er þat ætt þín, Óttarr heimski!
17. 'Var Hildigunn hennar móðir,
 Svávu barn ok Sækonungs;
 allt er þat ætt þín, Óttarr heimski;
 varðar at viti svá — viltu enn lengra?

10. 'He built me an altar, stacked with stones,³²
now that rock has turned to glass;³³
he reddened it with the fresh blood of cattle;
Óttarr always had faith in the Ásynjur.³⁴
11. 'Now let ancient kinsmen be enumerated
and the families of people which have been born:
who is of the Skjöldungar,³⁵ who is of the Skilfingar,³⁶
who is of the Auðlingar,³⁷ who is of the Ylfingar,³⁸
who is freeholder-born, who is chieftain-born,
the greatest choice³⁹ of humans under⁴⁰ Miðgarðr!'⁴¹
12. 'You, Óttarr,⁴² were born to Innsteinn,
and Innsteinn was born to Álfr the Old,⁴³
Álfr⁴⁴ was born to Úlfr,⁴⁵ Úlfr to Sæfari,⁴⁶
and Sæfari to Svanr⁴⁷ the Red.⁴⁸
13. 'Your father had a mother stately in torcs;
I think that she was called Hlédís the priestess;
Fróði was her father, and Frjaut her mother,⁴⁹
all that family was considered among the superior people.
14. 'Before that, Áli⁵⁰ was the mightiest of men,
Hálfdan⁵¹ before him, highest of the Skjöldungar;
famous were the battles, those which the excellent ones fought;
[the fame of] his⁵² deeds seemed to spread to the sky's corners.
15. 'He strengthened himself with [a marriage tie to] Eymundr,⁵³ best of men,
and he killed Sigtryggr⁵⁴ with cold edges,⁵⁵
he⁵⁶ married Álmveig,⁵⁷ best of women;
they bore and brought up⁵⁸ eighteen sons.⁵⁹
16. '[Descended] from there are the Skjöldungar, from there are the Skilfingar,
from there the Auðlingar, from there the Ynglingar,⁶⁰
from there the freeholder-born, from there the chieftain-born,
the greatest choice of humans under Miðgarðr;
all that is your family, Óttarr the Foolish!
17. 'Hildigunn⁶¹ was her⁶² mother,
the child of Sváva and of Sækonungr;⁶³
all these are your family, Óttarr the Foolish;
it's important that it be known thus — do you want even more?⁶⁴

18. 'Dagr átti Þóru drengjamóður;
 ólusk í ætt þar œztir kappar:
 Fraðmarr ok Gyrðr ok Frekar báðir,
 Ámr ok Jösurmarr, Álfr inn gamli;
 varðar at viti svá — viltu enn lengra?
19. 'Ketill hét vinr þeira, Klypps arfþegi;
 var hann móðurfaðir móður þinnar;
 þar var Fróði fyrr en Kári;
 hinn eldri var Álfr um getinn.
20. 'Nanna var næst þar, Nøkkva dóttir,
 var moðr hennar mágr þíns fóður;
 fyrnd er sú mægð — fram tel ek lengra;
 kunna ek báða Brodd ok Hörvi;
 allt er þat ætt þín, Óttarr heimski!
21. 'Ísólfur ok Ásólfur, Qlmóðs synir
 ok Skúrhildar, Skekkils dóttur;
 skaltu til telja skatna margra;
 allt er þat ætt þín, Óttarr heimski!
22. 'Gunnarr bálkr, Grímr arðskafi,
 járnskjöldr Þórir, Úlfr gínandi,
23. 'Búi ok Brámi, Barri ok Reifnir,
 Tindr ok Tyrfingr ok tveir Haddingjar;
 allt er þat ætt þín, Óttarr heimski!
24. 'Áni, Ómi váru bornir,
 Arngríms synir ok Eyfuru;
 braukun berserkja bøls margskonar
 um lönd ok um lög, sem logi, fœri;
 allt er þat ætt þín, Óttarr heimski!
25. 'Kunna ek báða Brodd ok Hörvi —
 váru þeir í hirð Hrólfus ins gamla —
 allir bornir frá Jormunreki,
 Sigurðar mági — hlýð þú soga minni! —
 fólkum grimms, þess er Fáfni vá.
26. 'Sá var vísir frá Völsungi,
 ok Hjordís frá Hrauðungi,
 en Eylimi frá Auðlingum;
 allt er þat ætt þín, Óttarr heimski!

18. 'Dagr⁶⁵ married Póra, Mother of Heroes;
there grew up in that family the greatest champions:
Fraðmarr⁶⁶ and Gyrðr⁶⁷ and both Frekis,⁶⁸
Ámr⁶⁹ and Josurmarr,⁷⁰ Álfr the Old,⁷¹
it's important that it be known thus — do you want even more?
19. 'Their friend was called Ketill,⁷² Klyppr's heir;
he was the grandfather of your mother;
there was Fróði earlier than Kári,⁷³
Álfr was begotten the elder.⁷⁴
20. 'Next there was Nanna,⁷⁵ Nøkkvi's⁷⁶ daughter,
her son was your father's in-law;
that marital kinship is forgotten — I'll count on further;
I knew both Broddr⁷⁷ and Hørvir,⁷⁸
all that is your family, Óttarr the Foolish!
21. 'Ísólfr and Ásólfr,⁷⁹ sons of Qlmóðr⁸⁰
and of Skúrhildr,⁸¹ Skekkill's⁸² daughter;
you must count them among many warriors;
all that is your family, Óttarr the Foolish!⁸³
22. 'Gunnarr Baulk, Grímr⁸⁴ Plough-Scraper,⁸⁵
Þórir Iron-Shield,⁸⁶ Úlfr⁸⁷ the Gaping,
23. 'Búi⁸⁸ and Brámi, Barri and Refnir,⁸⁹
Tindr and Tyrfingr and the two Haddingjar,⁹⁰
all that is your family, Óttarr the Foolish!
24. 'Áni [and] Ómi were born,⁹¹
the sons of Arngrímr⁹² and Eyfura;⁹³
the noise of berserkers' numerous kinds of evil
spread across lands and across sea, like fire,⁹⁴
all that is your family, Óttarr the Foolish!⁹⁵
25. 'I knew both Broddr and Hørvir⁹⁶ —
they were in the retinue of Hrólfr the Old⁹⁷ —
[and] all [those] descended from Jormunrek(k)r,⁹⁸
son-in-law of Sigurðr⁹⁹ — listen to my story! —
of the one hostile to hosts,¹⁰⁰ of the one who slew Fáfnir.¹⁰¹
26. 'That prince¹⁰² was descended from Völsungr,¹⁰³
and Hjordís¹⁰⁴ from Hrauðungr,¹⁰⁵
and Eylimi¹⁰⁶ from the Auðlingar,¹⁰⁷
all that is your family, Óttarr the Foolish!

27. 'Gunnarr ok Högni, Gjúka arfar,
ok it sama Guðrún, systir þeira;
eigi var Guthormr Gjúka ættar,
þó var hann bróðir beggja þeira;
allt er þat ætt þín, Óttarr heimski!
28. 'Haraldr hilditønn, borinn Hræreki
sløngvanbauga, sonr var hann Auðar;
Auðr djúpauðga Ívars dóttir,
en Ráðbarðr var Randvés faðir;
þeir váru gumnar goðum signaðir;
allt er þat ætt þín, Óttarr heimski!
29. 'Váru ellifu Æsir talðir,
Baldr er hné við banaþúfu;
þess létz Váli verðr at hefna,
síns bróður sló hann handbana;
allt er þat ætt þín, Óttarr heimski!
30. 'Var Baldrs faðir Burs arfpegi;
Freyr átti Gerði, hon var Gymis dóttir,
jöttna ættar, ok Aurboðu;
þó var Þjazi þeira frændi,
skautgjarn jötunn — hans var Skaði dóttir.
31. 'Mart segjum þér ok munum fleira;
vørumk at viti svá — viltu enn lengra?
32. 'Haki var Hvæðnu hóti beztr sona,
en Hvæðnu var Hjörvarðr faðir;
Heiðr ok Hrossbjófr Hrímnis kindar.
33. 'Eru völur allar frá Viðólfi,
vitkar allir frá Vilmeiði,
skilberendr frá Svarthöfða,
jöttnar allir frá Ymi komnir.
34. 'Mart segjum þér ok munum fleira;
vørumk at viti svá — viltu enn lengra?
35. 'Varð einn borinn í árdaga,
rammaukinn mjók, røgna kindar;
níu báru þann, naddgøfgan mann,
jötna meyjar, við jarðar þrom.

27. ‘Gunnarr and Högni, Gjúki’s heirs,
and so too Guðrún, their sister;
Guthormr was not of Gjúki’s family,¹⁰⁸
though he was the brother of them both;¹⁰⁹
all that is your family, Óttarr the Foolish!
28. ‘Haraldr War-Tooth,¹¹⁰ born to Hrcerekr¹¹¹
Ring-Slinger,¹¹² he¹¹³ was the son of Auðr;
Auðr¹¹⁴ the Deeply Rich [was] Ívarr’s daughter,¹¹⁵
and Ráðbarðr¹¹⁶ was Randvér’s father;
they were humans marked¹¹⁷ by the gods;
all that is your family, Óttarr the Foolish!
- 29.¹¹⁸ ‘There were eleven Æsir¹¹⁹ all told,¹²⁰
[and?] Baldr who sank down against the death-mound,¹²¹
Váli declared himself worthy to avenge this,
he slew his brother’s hand-slayer,¹²²
all that is your family, Óttarr the Foolish!
30. ‘Baldr’s father¹²³ was Burr’s heir;
Freyr married Gerðr, she was Gymir’s daughter,
of the kindred of giants, and of Aurboða;¹²⁴
Þjazi was yet their kinsman,
the covering(?)eager¹²⁵ giant — his daughter was Skaði.¹²⁶
31. ‘We¹²⁷ say much to you and will say more;
I expect that it should be known thus — do you want even more?
32. ‘Haki was by far the best of Hvæðna’s sons,
and Hjørvarðr¹²⁸ was father to Hvæðna;
Heiðr¹²⁹ and Hrossþjófr¹³⁰ [were] of Hrímnir’s kin.¹³¹
- 33.¹³² ‘All seeresses are [descended] from Viðólfr,¹³³
all wizards from Vilmeiðr,¹³⁴
message(?)bearing ones¹³⁵ from Svarthofði,¹³⁶
all giants are descended from Ymir.¹³⁷
34. ‘We say much to you and will say more;
I expect that it should be known thus — do you want even more?
35. ‘There was one born in ancient days,
much infused with supernatural strength, of the powers’ family,¹³⁸
nine bore him, the stud-ennobled(?)¹³⁹ man,
giants’ maidens, at the earth’s edge.¹⁴⁰

36. 'Mart segjum þér ok munum fleira;
vørumk at viti svá — viltu enn lengra?
37. 'Hann Gjálp um bar, hann Greip um bar,
bar hann Eistla ok Eyrgjafa;
hann bar Úlfrún ok Angeyja,
Imðr ok Atla ok Járnsaxa.
38. 'Sá var aukinn jarðar megni,
svalkoldum sæ ok sonardreyra.
39. 'Mart segjum þér ok munum fleira;
vørumk at viti svá — viltu enn lengra?
40. 'Ól úlf Loki við Angrboðu,
en Sleipni gat við Svaðilfara;
eitt þótti skars allra feiknast,
þat var bróður frá Býleists komit.
41. 'Loki át af hjarta lindi brendu,
fann hann hálfsviðinn hugstein konu;
varð Loptr kviðugr af konu illri;
þaðan er á foldu flagð hvert komit.
42. 'Haf gengr hríðum við himin sjálfan,
líðr lönd yfir, en lopt bilar;
þaðan koma snjóvar ok snarir vindar;
þá er í ráði at regn um þrjóti.
43. 'Varð einn borinn ǫllum meiri;
sá var aukinn jarðar megni;
þann kveða stilli stórauðgastan,
sif sifjaðan sjótum górvyllum.
44. 'Þá kemr annarr, enn mátkari,
þó þori ek eigi þann at nefna;
fáir sjá nú fram um lengra
en Óðinn man úlfí mœta.'
45. 'Ber þú minnisql mínum gelti,
svá hann ǫll muni orð at tína —
þessa rœðu — á þriðja morni,
þá er þeir Angantýr ættir reikna!'

36. ‘We say much to you and will say more;
I expect that it should be known thus — do you want even more?’
37. ‘Gjálp bore him,¹⁴¹ Greip bore him,¹⁴²
Eistla¹⁴³ bore him and Eyrgjafa,¹⁴⁴
Ulfrún¹⁴⁵ bore him and Angeyja,¹⁴⁶
Ímðr¹⁴⁷ and Atla¹⁴⁸ and Járnsaxa.¹⁴⁹
38. ‘He¹⁵⁰ was strengthened by earth’s power,
ice-cold sea and sacrificial boar’s blood.¹⁵¹
39. ‘We say much to you, and will say more;
I expect that it should be known thus — do you want even more?’
40. ‘Loki engendered a wolf on Angrboða,¹⁵²
and conceived Sleipnir by Svaðilfari,¹⁵³
one witch¹⁵⁴ was thought most evil of all,
that one had come from the brother of Býleistr.¹⁵⁵
41. ‘Loki ate of a heart burnt on¹⁵⁶ linden-wood,
he found the half-charred spirit¹⁵⁷-stone¹⁵⁸ of a woman;
Loptr¹⁵⁹ became pregnant by the evil woman;
from that every ogress on earth has come.¹⁶⁰
42. ‘The sea rises in storms against the sky itself,¹⁶¹
flows over lands, and the firmament fails;¹⁶²
from there come snows and strong winds;
then it is ordained that the powers¹⁶³ will end.¹⁶⁴
43. ‘There was one born greater than all;
he was strengthened by earth’s power;
they call that one the most greatly wealthy prince,
one related by kinship to all seats.¹⁶⁵
44. ‘Then comes another, even mightier,
though I dare not name that one;¹⁶⁶
few now see further ahead
than when Óðinn will encounter the wolf.’¹⁶⁷
45. ‘Bring the memory-ale¹⁶⁸ to my gelded boar,¹⁶⁹
so that he may remember to¹⁷⁰ recount all the words —
this conversation — on the third morning,¹⁷¹
when he and Angantýr enumerate their families!’¹⁷²

46. 'Snúðu burt heðan! Sofa lystir mik —
 fær þú fát af mér fríðra kosta!
 Hleypr þú, eðlvina, úti á náttum,
 sem með hoþrum Heiðrún fari!
47. 'Rant at œði, ey þreyjandi —
 skutusk þér fleiri und fyrirskyrtu!
 Hleypr þú, eðlvina, úti á náttum,
 sem með hoþrum Heiðrún fari!
48. 'Ek slæ eldi af íviðju,
 svá at þú ei kemsk á burt heðan!
 Hleypr þú, eðlvina, úti á náttum,
 sem með hoþrum Heiðrún fari!
49. 'Hyr sé ek brenna, en hauðr loga —
 verða flestir fjörlausn þola!
 Ber þú Óttari bjór at hendi,
 eitri blandinn mjók, illu heili!
 Hleypr þú, eðlvina, úti á náttum,
 sem með hoþrum Heiðrún fari!'
50. 'Orðheill þín skal engu ráða,
 þóttu, brúðr jötuns, bolvi heitir!
 Hann skal drekka dýrar veigar!
 Bið ek Óttari qll goð duga!'

46. 'Get away from here! I want to sleep —
you'll get few good choices from me!
You run around, noble(?) friend,¹⁷³ outside at night,¹⁷⁴
like Heiðrún¹⁷⁵ gadding with he-goats!¹⁷⁶
47. 'You ran in a sexual frenzy(?),¹⁷⁷ forever yearning —
several have thrust themselves under your fore-skirt!
You run around, noble(?) friend, outside at night,
like Heiðrún gadding with he-goats!
- 48.¹⁷⁸ 'I strike with fire from the wood-dweller(?),¹⁷⁹
so that you won't get away from here!
You run around, noble(?) friend, outside at night,
like Heiðrún gadding with he-goats!¹⁸⁰
- 49.¹⁸¹ 'I see fire burning, and the earth blaze,¹⁸²
most will have to suffer life-loss!¹⁸³
Bring beer to Óttarr's hand,
much blended with poison, with bad luck!
You run around, noble(?) friend, outside at night,
like Heiðrún gadding with he-goats!'¹⁸⁴
50. 'Your curse shall command no one,¹⁸⁵
even though, giant's bride, you threaten evil!
He shall drink precious drinks!
I ask all gods to aid Óttarr!'

Textual Apparatus to *Hyndluljóð*

Hyndluljóð] This title is taken, in emended form, from the initial line of prose, which is rubricated in the manuscript, Flateyjarbók (F)

Hyndluljóð] F *hyndlū hlīod*

2/1 *Herjaþóðr]* F *heriansfaudur* 'Herjan's father', *Herjan* being an alias of Óðinn, whose father was Burr/Borr (cf. *Hdl.* 30)

3/1 *sumum]* F *sonum* 'sons'

4/1 *Pór]* F *þo* followed by a one-letter space (possibly an erased or faded 'r')

5/2 *einn]* F *ein*

7/6 *gullinbursti]* F *gullin busti*

11/7 *hvat er Auðlinga]* F absent

15/3 *vá]* F absent

15/6 *kvinna]* F *kvinnu*

17/3 *Svávu]* F *suofu*

17/7 *varðar]* F *uardi*

19/2 *Klypps]* F *klyps*

20/1 *Nanna]* F *Manna*

21/7–8] F abbreviates *allt*

23/5–6] F abbreviates *allt er þat*

24/9–10] F abbreviates *allt er þat*

26/7–8] F abbreviates *allt er þat*

27/9–10] F abbreviates *allt er þat*

28/4 *sonr]* F *sonar*

28/11–12] F abbreviates *allt.*

29/9–10] F abbreviates *allt er þat*

30/4 *Gymis]* F *geymis*

31/4 *lengra]* F *fleira* (cf. 31/2 and 34/4)

35/6 *naddgøfgan]* F *nadbaufgann*

36/1] F includes only the first three words of this repeated stanza

39/1] F includes only the first three words of this repeated stanza

41/1 *át]* F absent

41/4 *konu]* F *komu*

45/5 *pessa]* F *persa*

46/4 *friðra*] F *fridia*

47/3 *pér*] F *pēir*

47/7–8] F absent; text supplied editorially on the model of the previous stanza

48/6–8] F absent; text supplied editorially on the model of the previous two stanzas

49/9–12] F abbreviates *Hleypr þu*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 Editors traditionally emend the manuscript title *Hyndluljóð* ‘Hyndla’s Hearing/Audience’ to *Hyndluljóð* ‘Hyndla’s Song’, though this sacrifices the ‘harder’, and therefore potentially original, reading; cf. the *vqlva*’s request for a *hljóð* ‘hearing/audience’ in *Vsp.* 1.
- 2 Óttarr is a commonly attested male personal name, the etymological meaning of which is perhaps ‘Fear(some) Army’. *Heimskr* ‘foolish, ignorant’ means literally ‘home-ish’—that is, lacking knowledge as a ‘stay at home’.
- 3 A superlative; cf. *Hrbl.* 1, *Gōr.* II 1. The speaker, we learn from *Hdl.* 6, is the goddess Freyja. Hyndla’s sleep might be akin to death.
- 4 ‘Little Bitch’, a giantess. Freyja’s use of the word ‘sister’, like ‘friend’, appears ingratiating, but her brother, Freyr, did marry a giantess, Gerðr, and her stepmother was, for a time, another giantess, Skaði (see *FSk.* and *Hdl.* 30).
- 5 I.e., possibly a night when the moon is in its dark phase; alternatively, ‘twilight of twilights’. Either way, an intimation of Ragnarok seems likely.
- 6 ‘Hall of the Slain’, residence of the god Óðinn and his warriors.
- 7 ‘Father of Armies’, an alias of Óðinn.
- 8 *Hermóðr* ‘Army-Spirited One’ is apparently a man here and in *Hák.* 14; cf. the early Danish king *Heremōð* in *Beowulf*. In *SnEGylf* (49, pp. 46–47), however, Hermóðr is a son of Óðinn and therefore presumably at least partly divine; Óðinn lends him Sleipnir to ride to Hel after the slain Baldr, but the gift of helmet and mail-coat is known only from *Hdl.*
- 9 Sigmundr (*Sigemund* in *Beowulf*) is the father of the greatest Northern hero, Sigurðr. His taking of a sword from the tree-trunk in which Óðinn had plunged it is described in *VS* 3.
- 10 Presumably sailors in particular.
- 11 Freyja speaks of herself in the third person.
- 12 Pórr is famous for killing giants. That a goddess should sacrifice to a god is a unique, perhaps absurd, idea.
- 13 A wolf is a typical mount for a giantess.
- 14 Despite Freyja’s denial in *Hdl.* 7, it seems clear from *Hdl.* 6 and 45 that her boar is, indeed, a shape-shifted Óttarr.
- 15 I.e., her wolf.
- 16 Hyndla either uses the royal ‘we’ or refers to herself and her wolves.
- 17 Possibly Freyja’s gaze compelled Hyndla to reveal the information she wanted to know. Cf. *Vsp.* 28.
- 18 Or ‘husband’.

- 19 Either the road to Valhöll or to Hel. Alternatively, ‘in the slaughter-escort’. Either way, this reference might allude to Freyja’s claiming of the slain (*Grm.* 14).
- 20 Chapter 10 of the fourteenth-century *Hálfssaga ok Hálfrekka* ‘Saga of Hálfur and Hálfur’s Warriors’ identifies Innsteinn as the elder son of Jarl Álfr the Old of Hörðaland, Norway; see also *Hdl.* 12.
- 21 Cf. Freyr’s dwarf-made boar *Gullinbu(r)sti* ‘Golden-Bristled’, mentioned in *SnEGylf* (49, p. 47), *SnESkáld* (I, 7, p. 18; 35, p. 42); *Húsdr.* 7.
- 22 ‘Battle Swine’. This is also the name of a (probably boar-ornamented) helmet in *SnESkáld* (I, 44, p. 58).
- 23 ‘One Who Has Died’.
- 24 ‘Bump’.
- 25 This stanza might be spoken by either Freyja or Hyndla. This edition attributes it to Freyja, who perhaps concedes that they may stay where they are as long as they can talk.
- 26 A common metaphor for ‘princes’, but the literal sense ‘boars’ is obviously also relevant.
- 27 I.e., Welsh or foreign gold.
- 28 ‘Fragrant God’, but the name is quite likely an alteration of **Anganþér* ‘Fragrant Servant’. In *Vsp.* 52, *Angantýr* may be an alias of Óðinn, but here it is possibly the name of Óttarr’s elder brother. Cf. OE *Ongentheow* and his son *Othere* (cognate with ON **Anganþér* and *Óttarr*) in *Beowulf*, though the familial relationships differ.
- 29 Óttarr.
- 30 Or ‘keep’.
- 31 The nature of the bet is not made clear, but we can probably infer that it was about which of them had more knowledge of their glorious ancestry and the better ability to recount it. The winner would gain the right to inherit their father’s lands and wealth.
- 32 A secondary sense might be ‘gemstones’.
- 33 Presumably from the heat of sacrificial fires.
- 34 Goddesses. Here they presumably include Freyja, although she was one of the Vanir by birth.
- 35 The descendants of *Skjoldr* ‘Shield’ (OE *Scyld* in *Beowulf*), a Danish dynasty (the *Scyldingas* of *Beowulf*).
- 36 The descendants of a *skjálf* ‘shelf’ or perhaps of *Skilfingr*, an alias of Óðinn. They were a Swedish dynasty (the *Scylfingas* of *Beowulf*).
- 37 *SnESkáld* (I, 64, p. 103) identifies Auði, from whom this dynasty descends, as a son of King Hálfdan the Old (mentioned in *Hdl.* 14).
- 38 The dynasty to which Helgi Hundingsbani also belonged (*HH. I* 5). It corresponds to the *Wylfingas* ‘Wolfings’ of *Beowulf*. *Hdl.* 16 has *Ynglinga* instead.
- 39 Freyja’s word *val* ‘choice’, ‘selection’ is also suggestive of *valr* ‘the slaughtered dead’; cf. *Hdl.* 6, *Grm.* 14.
- 40 I.e., under the cover of, in the protection of. *Miðgarðr* was a term for both the world of humans and the wall surrounding it.
- 41 This statement and the following ones in this stanza could also be interrogative.
- 42 Hyndla presumably addresses Freyja’s boar, which she perceives to be Óttarr.

- 43 See note to *Hdl.* 6.
- 44 'Natural/Noble Wolf' or, less likely here, 'Elf'.
- 45 'Wolf'.
- 46 'Seafarer'.
- 47 'Swan'.
- 48 The genealogy from Svanr to Álfr also appears elsewhere in *Flateyjarbók*, in chapter 1 of the text *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* 'How Norway was settled'.
- 49 *Hlédís* 'Lee Lady', 'Protecting Supernatural Female' and *Frjaut* (or *Frjöt*) are otherwise unknown names. *Fróði* 'Wise/Fertile One' was a common name among legendary Danish kings.
- 50 Áli is the name of several figures in the legendary sagas, though some editors think it is here a mistake for *Auði*, a son of Hálfdan and the progenitor of the Auðlingar of *Hdl.* 11.
- 51 'Half-Dane'; see *SnE Skáld* (I, 64, pp. 101–03) and *Ættartala frá Haud* 'Genealogy from Höðr' in *Flateyjarbók*. He appears as *Healfdene* in *Beowulf*.
- 52 I.e., Hálfdan.
- 53 Hálfdan married Eymundr's daughter.
- 54 'Victory True/Confident', a king whom Hálfdan slew in single combat in the East.
- 55 I.e., a sword.
- 56 Hálfdan.
- 57 Perhaps 'Elm Strength'. Elsewhere she is called *Alvig/Alvíg* and *Álfny*.
- 58 Literally, 'had'.
- 59 *SnE Skáld* (I, 64, p. 101) places Hálfdan's marriage after his defeat of Sigtryggr in single combat in the East. It identifies his wife as *Alvig in spaka* 'the Wise' and her father as *E(y)mundr inn ríki* 'the Powerful' from Hólmgarðr, Novgorod; their eighteen sons are named.
- 60 The descendants of Yngvi, one of Hálfdan's sons, though *Yngvi* is also a name of the god Freyr. See further *Ynglinga saga*. Cf. *Ylfingar* in *Hdl.* 11.
- 61 'Battle Fight'.
- 62 Álmveig in *Hdl.* 15 is the most recently mentioned female.
- 63 Another *Sváva* 'Swabian (Woman)' appears in *HHv*. *Sækonungr* means 'Sea King'.
- 64 Literally, 'do you want still longer?' Cf. the seeress's similar repeated question in *Vsp*.
- 65 'Day', a son of Hálfdan the Old.
- 66 Possibly 'Wise (and) Glorious One'.
- 67 Perhaps originally 'Good/God Peace/Protection'.
- 68 I.e., two of the males were each called *Freki* 'Greedy', which is also a poetic term for 'wolf'.
- 69 Ostensibly at least, 'Dark/Loathsome One'.
- 70 *Josur(r)* is a name of uncertain meaning; *-marr* probably means 'famous, glorious'.
- 71 These seven great champions are little more than names now.
- 72 'Kettle', 'Cauldron'.
- 73 Possibly the same Fróði was mentioned earlier in *Hdl.* 13. Elsewhere *kári* is a poetic term for the wind.

- 74 These might be the names of men from Hørðaland, Norway.
- 75 Possibly distinct from Baldr's wife Nanna.
- 76 'Ship'.
- 77 'Spike'.
- 78 These names recur in *Hdl.* 25.
- 79 'Ice Wolf' and 'God Wolf'.
- 80 'Ale Courage'.
- 81 'Shower Battle'.
- 82 This name, which possibly means 'Wry (One)', is that of a sea-king in *SnESkáld* (I, 75, p. 109).
- 83 Óttarr's relatives in this stanza are obscure.
- 84 'Masked One'.
- 85 He was possibly a ploughman or a maker of ploughs.
- 86 Þórir Iron-Shield also appears in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*.
- 87 'Wolf'.
- 88 'Dweller' or 'Neighbour'.
- 89 A sea-king, elsewhere at least.
- 90 Elsewhere, these last two are the youngest sons of Arngrímr (named in the next stanza); cf. *Gðr.* II 22.
- 91 In the Old Norse line vowels alliterate with the *v*- in *váru* (*vóru*, *óru*).
- 92 'Eagle-Masked One'.
- 93 'Island Fir'.
- 94 I.e., wildfire.
- 95 On the relationships of names listed in stt. 22-4 to similar passages in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, *Qrvar-Odds saga* and *GD*, see von See et al., *Kommentar*, III, 750-75.
- 96 These names appeared earlier in *Hdl.* 20.
- 97 Identity uncertain.
- 98 Jormunrek(k)r, king of the Goths, married Svanhildr, daughter of Sigurðr and Guðrún (see *VS* 41-42, *Ghv.*, *Hm.*).
- 99 Greatest legendary hero of the ancient North, who appears in some of the heroic Eddic poems in *R*.
- 100 I.e., hosts of enemies.
- 101 A dragon; for his death, see *Fm.* and *VS* 18.
- 102 Sigurðr.
- 103 Sigurðr was the son of Sigmundr, son of Vølsungr (*VS* 2, 13).
- 104 Sigurðr's mother.
- 105 Possibly Hjordís's maternal grandfather. The name appears in *SnESkáld* (I, 75, pp. 110, 114) as that of a sea-king and a giant; see also the prose introduction to *Grm.*
- 106 Father of Hjordís.
- 107 See *Hdl.* 11.

- 108 I.e., blood.
- 109 These famous characters appear in some of the heroic poems in this collection, as well as in *VS*; the poet implies that Guthormr, Sigurðr's killer, was Gjúki's stepson.
- 110 A legendary Danish king whose name means 'Army Ruler'; see especially Books 7 and 8 of *GD* (with the name 'War-Tooth' explained in 7.10.4).
- 111 For Hrørekr, a legendary king of Denmark, see especially Book 3 of *GD*, in which he appears as *Roricus Slyngebond*, whose father was *Hotherus* (ON *Hǫðr*), slayer of *Balderus* (ON *Baldr*; cf. *Hdl.* 29).
- 112 An honorific indicating a king's generosity, but applied somewhat ironically to Hrørekr as he slung his arm-ring into the sea by mistake, according to *GD* (3.5.6).
- 113 Haraldr.
- 114 Fem. *auðr* means 'fate, destiny', but note also masc. *auðr* 'riches'.
- 115 Ívarr, known as *Ívarr viðfaðmi* 'Ívarr the Widely Embracing', was a legendary king of Sweden.
- 116 'Counsel Beard', a king of Russia; Auðr's second husband.
- 117 I.e., blessed, though some distinctive physical feature is also possible.
- 118 Scholars often call stt. 29–44 *Völuspá hin skamma* 'The Short *Völuspá* [Prophecy of the Seeress]', this being the name of the poem from which a version of *Hdl.* 33 is taken, according to *SnEGylf* (5, p. 10).
- 119 Heathen gods. The term sometimes describes a group, led by Óðinn, which was originally distinct from another divine group, the Vanir.
- 120 Or perhaps the intended sense is that there were eleven Æsir when (i.e., after) Baldr died. *SnEGylf* (20, p. 21) claims there are twelve Æsir. A list in *SnESkáld* (I, G55, p. 1) also runs to twelve.
- 121 Presumably a barrow. Baldr was killed by Hǫðr.
- 122 I.e., Hǫðr, who slew Baldr by casting a spear from his hand; cf. *Vsp.* 31–33, *SnEGylf* (49, pp. 45–46).
- 123 Óðinn.
- 124 'Mud Offerer/Announcer/Summoner', a giantess; for this story, see *FSk.*, *Ls.* 42 and *SnEGylf* (37, pp. 30–31).
- 125 Perhaps this term indicates a penchant for disguises, shape-changing or sailing (*skaut* can denote the corner of a sail). Elsewhere, Þjazi takes the form of an eagle (*SnESkáld*, I, G56, pp. 1–2). Alternatively, perhaps emend to *skóðgjarn* 'harm-eager', *skrautgjarn* 'jewelry-eager' or *skotgjarn* 'shot/shooting-eager'.
- 126 A giantess who married Freyja's father, Njörðr.
- 127 Either a royal 'we' or an indication that another being speaks through Hyndla.
- 128 'Sword Guardian'.
- 129 Cf. *Vsp.* 22.
- 130 'Horse Thief'; attested as a giant-name.
- 131 Hrímnr was a giant; he also appears in *FSk.* 28.
- 132 A variant of this stanza appears in *SnEGylf* (5, p. 10), where it is attributed to *Völuspá hin skamma* 'The Short *Völuspá*'; Snorri interprets the giants as *hrímpursar* 'rime/frost-giants'.

- 133 'Wood Wolf'. *GD* (7.2.2) mentions a certain *Vitolfus*, who was skilled in medicine and sorcery. In *SnEUpp* (8, p. 16) the name is *Viktólfur*.
- 134 Possibly 'Wish Tree/Banch'; alternatively, *Vilmeiðr*, which could mean 'Misery Tree/Branch'. Either way, this person is otherwise unknown.
- 135 The otherwise unattested noun *skilberendr* could mean literally 'message/knowledge/discernment-bearing ones', which might denote 'wise men' or 'sorcerers'. It is, however, metrically abnormal here, as *sk-* usually alliterates only with *sk-*. In its place the version of this stanza in *SnEGylf* (5, p. 10) has another unique noun: *seiðberendr*, literally '*seiðr*-bearing ones', i.e., male practitioners of the type of fem. sorcery called *seiðr*. To eliminate the alliterative abnormality, many editors replace *Hdl.*'s word with that of *SnEGylf*, which is there preceded by *en* 'and/but'.
- 136 'Black Head'. He is otherwise unknown.
- 137 For the primordial giant Ymir, see *Vsp.* 3.
- 138 I.e., of the gods.
- 139 The emended adjective *naddgofgan* could mean 'stud-ennobled' or 'spear-ennobled', the former sense might allude to the Pole Star as the 'stud' about which the sky was thought to revolve. In *Gg.* 14 it may describe Mímir. Alternative emendations include *naddhøfgan*, *náðhøfgan* and *náðgofgan*, respectively 'stud/spear-heavy', 'mercy-heavy' and 'mercy-ennobled'.
- 140 The 'man' is actually the god Heimdallr. *SnEGylf* (27, p. 26) quotes a couplet from *Heimdalargaldr* 'Heimdallr's Incantation', an otherwise lost poem, in which the god declares: *Níu em ek mæðra mogr, / níu em ek sysstra sonr* 'I am the son of nine mothers, I am the son of nine sisters'. Earlier, the tenth-century Icelandic poet Úlfr Uggason described Heimdallr as *mæðra mogr ... ok einnar átta* 'the son of eight mothers and of one' (*SnESkáld*, I, 16, p. 20). His nine mothers, named in *Hdl.* 37, and mentioned in *Húsdr.* 2, are apparently giantesses (cf. *Vsp.* 2), possibly daughters of the sea-giant Ægir, who personify waves. The 'earth's edge' might be the seashore or the horizon; cf. the prose preface to *Rþ*.
- 141 I.e., Heimdallr.
- 142 *Gjálp* and *Greip*, probably 'Yelp' and 'Grip', are daughters of the giant Geirrøðr in *SnESkáld* (I, 18, p. 25).
- 143 Basically 'Stormy One'.
- 144 'Sandbank/Mud Giver'.
- 145 'Wolf Rune'.
- 146 Meaning uncertain.
- 147 Possibly 'Embered One'; cf. *HH. I* 43.
- 148 'Terrible One'.
- 149 Járnsaxa '(One With) Iron Knife'. Járnsaxa is also the mother of Þórr's son, Magni, in *SnESkáld* (I, 17, p. 22).
- 150 I.e., Heimdallr.
- 151 Cf. *Gðr. II* 21.
- 152 'Anguish Offerer/Announcer'. Loki's union with this giantess produced the wolf Fenrir, as well as the Miðgarðsormr and Hel, ruler of the underworld; see *SnEGylf* (34, p. 27).

- 153 'Slippery-Place Traveller' (the pl. *svaðilfarar*, *-ferðir* means 'disasters'). *Sleipnir* 'Slippy One' is Óðinn's eight-legged horse; the story is told in *SnEGylf* (42, p. 34–35). Loki was sometimes male, sometimes female.
- 154 Probably Hel.
- 155 The brother of *Býleistr* 'Farmstead Foot/Sock(?)' is Loki, Býleistr probably being Óðinn, Loki's blood-brother; cf. *Vsp.* H 43, R 49.
- 156 Or 'with'.
- 157 Or 'mood-', 'courage-', 'mind-'.
- 158 I.e., heart.
- 159 'Lofty', 'Airy', a by-name of Loki.
- 160 This episode is otherwise unknown, but cf. *Ls.* 23.
- 161 Or 'The sea often rises [literally, "goes"] against the sky itself.'
- 162 I.e., the sky gives way. The words *lopt bilar* might also hint at 'Loptr [i.e., Loki] breaks (free)'; cf. *Vsp.* 46.
- 163 Or 'rain'.
- 164 A concise description of the mighty winter that heralds Ragnarok.
- 165 I.e., dynastic seats, families. The person described is probably Heimdallr; cf. *Hdl.* 35–38, *Vsp.* 1.
- 166 Possibly Christ; see *Vsp.* H 57 and note thereto.
- 167 I.e., at Ragnarok, when the wolf Fenrir will devour Óðinn; cf. *Vsp.* 52.
- 168 I.e., a drink to strengthen Óttarr's memory of what he has just heard. Cf. *Sd.* 2 pr.
- 169 I.e., to Óttarr.
- 170 Or 'he will'.
- 171 I.e., three mornings hence.
- 172 With these words, Freyja acknowledges that Hyndla's identification of the boar as Óttarr is correct.
- 173 The meaning of *eðl-* in *eðlvina* 'eðl-friend' is uncertain, but the word might be related to ON *øðli* 'origin, lineage' and *óðal* 'nature', and to OE *æðel* 'noble'. Whatever its meaning, a sarcastic response to Freyja's similar use of *vina* in *Hdl.* 1 seems likely; if *eðl-* means 'natural', the sarcasm might extend to Freyja's claim to be Hyndla's 'sister'. Here, as in *Hdl.* 47 and 48, Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, ed., *Eddukvæði* (Reykjavík, 2014), I, emends to *Óðs vina* 'Óðr's friend' (cf. *Vsp.* 25), Óðr being Freyja's husband in *Vsp.* 25 and *SnEGylf* (35, p. 29). Cf. note to *Hdl.* 47.
- 174 Literally, 'nights'.
- 175 A mythical she-goat, the subject of *Grm.* 25, from whose udder flows mead for the champions in Valhöll.
- 176 Freyja had a reputation for promiscuity. Þórr owned two billy-goats.
- 177 Some editors emend *at æði* 'in a sexual frenzy(?)' to *at Óði* 'to Óðr'; cf. note to *Hdl.* 46.
- 178 It is uncertain whether the first half of this stanza is spoken by Hyndla or Freyja (see below).
- 179 *Íviðja*, perhaps literally 'she (who dwells) in a tree/wood', is attested as a term for a troll-woman (see note to *Vsp.* 2); arguably, Hyndla refers to herself as such in the third person

- (cf. Freyja in *Hdl.* 4 and the seeress in *Vsp.*). Alternatively, maybe she strikes fire from some sort of withy/branch (ON *viðja*).
- 180 Many scholars consider the second half of this stanza, abbreviated in the manuscript, a mistaken repetition from the previous two stanzas.
- 181 This stanza is certainly spoken by Hyndla.
- 182 This significance of this statement is unclear; possibly it is deliberately polysemous. It might confirm that Hyndla's(?) fire is taking hold. Alternatively, it might signal the dawn, when the sun's rays (cast by Freyja in the previous stanza?), would turn Hyndla to stone (cf. *HHv.* 29–30, *Alv.* 35). Equally, it might signal the imminent arrival of Pórr in his chariot drawn by goats, doubtless to kill Hyndla (cf. *Brk.* 21; *SnE Skáld*, I, 17, pp. 22–23). Or, since graves were often imagined as fiery, it might mark the readiness of Hyndla's open, tomb-like cave to receive her, now that her discourse with Freyja is over. Yet another possibility, in view of prior references to Ragnarok, is that Hyndla sees the apocalyptic, world-consuming fire brought by the giants.
- 183 I.e., death.
- 184 Again, many scholars consider the last two lines of this stanza a mistaken repetition.
- 185 I.e., Hyndla's poisoned, cursed drink will fail.

Svipdagsmál

(*Gróugaldr* and *Fjolsvinnsmál*)

The poems *Gróugaldr* (Gg.) ‘Gróa’s Incantation’ and *Fjolsvinnsmál* (Fj.) ‘The Sayings of Fjolsvinnr’, both of which are in *ljóðaháttir*, survive in neither R nor A nor any other medieval source, but only in numerous seventeenth-century manuscripts. The essence of the eponymous hero Svipdagr’s quest is also known from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scandinavian ballads about a certain *ungen Sveidal* ‘young Sveidal’ (and variants of this name), although these do not derive immediately from the Eddic poems, from which they differ substantially by, among other things, omitting much of the dialogue.¹ On this basis, Gg. and Fj., which appear to represent the start and conclusion of the hero’s quest, are often presented together in editions under the modern title of *Svipdagsmál* ‘The Lay of Svipdagr’. The date of the Eddic poems’ composition is uncertain, but it is likely that they at least draw on medieval story-elements, themes and imagery.

Among the undoubtedly medieval Eddic poems, *FSk.* contains the most apparent parallels to Svipdagr’s quest. Despite gaps in the story of Svipdagr—whether due to textual loss or because knowledge of the missing events was assumed—and many textual difficulties in Fj., it seems that in both *FSk.* and *Svipdagsmál* the hero (in *FSk.*, Skírnir) undertakes a perilous journey to an Otherworldly complex in the land of giants, one implicitly visited otherwise only by the dead. He does so to win a female associated with light (respectively, Gerðr and Mengloð), who inhabits a residence rich with gold and surrounded by ‘discerning flicker-flame’. In both cases the hero converses with an unwelcoming giant, passes ferocious guard-dogs and, it seems likely, acquires a remarkable twig-weapon with which he finally wins the object of his bridal quest.

Collectively, these similarities appear more than coincidental. They invite the proposal that *Svipdagsmál* is informed by a mythic theme akin to that of *FSk.* (insofar as that can be discerned), which, I have argued elsewhere, may well be celestial (solar/lunar) in nature.² It is, however, debatable to what extent this theme, if present, was

¹ For an English translation of one Swedish ballad, in which the object of the hero’s quest is called *Spegelklar* ‘Mirrorclear’, see I. Cumpstey, trans., *The Faraway North: Scandinavian Ballads* (Cumbria: Skadi Press, 2016), pp. 71–76.

² See E. Pettit, *The Waning Sword: Conversion Imagery and Celestial Myth in ‘Beowulf’* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.11647/obp.0190>, especially chapters 7 and 16.

apparent to the composers of these poems and their audiences, and how completely and coherently the surviving poems communicate it.

Synopsis

Gróugaldr

Prose: An initial sentence explains that this poem is called ‘Gróa’s Incantation’, which Gróa chanted to her son (later named as Svipdagr) when she was dead.

Verse: Svipdagr calls on his mother to awaken at her grave (1). She asks him the nature of his trouble (2). He says that his (unnamed) stepmother has set him an impossible task—to visit a certain Menglǫð (3). Gróa replies that his journey will be long, if it proves successful (4), whereupon the fearful Svipdagr asks her for incantations to protect him (5).

Gróa chants him nine incantations: the first, which Rindr chanted to Rani, to enable Svipdagr to thrust aside something terrible (6); the second, associated with the Norn Urðr, to aid him on roads he would rather not travel (7); the third, to subdue dangerous rivers as he passes them (8); the fourth, to pacify enemies (9); the fifth, to loosen shackles (10), the sixth, to calm a maelstrom and grant safe passage (11); the seventh, to prevent frostbite (12); the eighth, to protect against a dead Christian woman at night (13); the ninth, to elicit wisdom from the giant Mímir (14).

Gróa then gives Svipdagr a parting blessing and stresses that he must remember her words (15–16).

Fjölsvinnsmál

Verse: This poem begins with Svipdagr observing a fortress of the giants, which rises into view as he approaches it, and a voice—probably that of a giant (or possibly a dwarf)—telling him to be off (1). Svipdagr asks what sort of ‘ogress’ (actually probably a male giant) he sees moving amid the flames that surround at least part of the stronghold, and the giant asks him his purpose (2). Svipdagr again asks for the ‘ogress’s’ identity and remarks on his lack of hospitality, at which the giant again tells him to be on his way (3). The giant adds that he is called Fjölsviðr, and tells him to depart a third time (4). Svipdagr expresses his desire to live in the glowing courts and golden halls that he sees (5).

Fjölsviðr asks for Svipdagr’s origins, and Svipdagr conceals his true identity in reply (6). Svipdagr asks who controls the stronghold (7). Fjölsviðr says it is Menglǫð (8). Svipdagr asks the name of the highly dangerous gate before him (9). Fjölsviðr identifies it as Prymgjöll, which was made by the sons of Sólblindi (probably dwarves), and which fetters every visitor who tries to open it (10). Svipdagr enquires about the dangerous courtyard he sees (11). Fjölsviðr identifies it as Gastropnir, an enclosure of clay, which will stand as long as the world endures (12). Svipdagr asks about the

fierce dogs he sees (13). Fjölsviðr identifies them as Gífr and Geri (14). Svipdagr asks whether anyone can get inside while these dogs sleep (15). Fjölsviðr says no, because one dog sleeps by night, the other by day (16). Svipdagr asks whether they can be distracted by any meat (17). Fjölsviðr says only by pieces of Viðófnir, a cockerel (18).

Svipdagr asks the name of the tree whose branches spread through all lands (19). Fjölsviðr calls it Mímameiðr, whose demise will be unexpected, as neither fire nor iron can harm it (20). Svipdagr asks what comes from that tree's spirit(?) (21). Fjölsviðr says that exposing its fruit to fire (to produce smoke?) helps women with complaints of the womb(?) (22).

Svipdagr asks the name of the golden cockerel sitting in the tree (23). Fjölsviðr calls him Viðófnir, who oppresses the giantess Sinmara (wife or daughter of the fire-giant Surtr) with a single sorrow (24). Svipdagr asks whether any weapon can kill Viðófnir (25). Fjölsviðr says it is called *Lævateinn* 'Twig of Treacheries', but that Loptr (Loki) plucked it and took down to the world of the dead, where it resides in a strongly locked chest beside Sinmara (26). Svipdagr asks whether anyone can go after that twig and escape alive (27). Fjölsviðr indicates that this is possible, if that person can bring a rare object to Sinmara in exchange (28). Svipdagr asks for the object's identity (29). Fjölsviðr identifies it as a radiant sickle that Viðófnir keeps hold of (30).

Svipdagr asks the name of the flame-surrounded hall (31). Fjölsviðr calls it Lýr, and says it trembles on a spike and, for humans, is the subject of hearsay alone (32). Svipdagr asks who made it (33). Fjölsviðr lists the names of its makers, who are apparently dwarves (34).

Svipdagr asks the name of the rock on which he sees a bride (presumably Menglöð) (35). Fjölsviðr calls it Lyfjaberg and identifies it as a pleasure for the sick and for infertile women, if they climb it (36). Svipdagr asks the names of the maidens who sing (or sit) before Menglöð (37). Fjölsviðr names them (38). Svipdagr asks whether they protect women who sacrifice to them (39). Fjölsviðr says they protect everyone who sacrifices to them (40).

Svipdagr enquires whether any man can sleep in Menglöð's arms (41). Fjölsviðr says none can, except Svipdagr, who is destined to marry her (42). Svipdagr immediately commands that the doors be opened, reveals his true name, and asks whether Menglöð will receive him warmly (43). Menglöð is informed of the arrival of the newcomer, whom, the messenger thinks, is Svipdagr (44). She declares that ravens shall blind the messenger if he is lying (45). She asks Svipdagr his origin and name (46). He identifies himself as *Svipdagr*, son of *Sólþjartr* 'Swooping/Fleeting Day, son of Sun-Bright' (47), whereupon Menglöð welcomes him with a kiss and her love (48). She says that, having waited for him for ages, her wish has finally come true (49), that their painful love-longings are over, and that they shall live passionately together for the rest of their days (50).

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Gróugaldr

Gróugaldr, er hon gól syni sínum dauð:

1. 'Vaki þú, Gróa! Vaki þú, góð kona!
Vek ek þík dauðra dura,
ef þú þat mant, at þú þinn mog bæðir
til kumbldysjar koma!'
2. 'Hvat er nú annt mínum einga syni?
Hverju ertu nú bølví borinn,
er þú þá móður kallar,
er til moldar er komin
ok ór ljóðheimum liðin?'
3. 'Ljótu leikborði skaut fyr mik hin lævísá kona,
sú er faðmaði minn fóður;
þar bað hon mik koma, er kvæmtki veit —
móti Mengloðu!'
4. 'Lóng er fór, langir ru farvegar,
langir ru manna munir,
ef þat verðr at þú þinn vilja bíðr,
ok skeikar þá Skuld at skopum.'
5. 'Galdra þú mér gal, þá er góðir eru —
bjarg þú, móðir, megi!
Á vegum allr hygg ek at ek verða muna,
þykkjumk ek til ungr afi!'
6. 'Þann gel ek þér fyrstan, þann kveða fjölnýtan,
þann gól Rindr Rani,
at þú of oxl skjótir því er þér atalt þykkir —
sjálfir leið þú sjálfan þík.
7. 'Þann gel ek þér annan, ef þú árna skalt
viljalauss á vegum:
Urðar lokur haldi þér öllum megum,
er þú á *sinnum* sér.'
8. 'Þann gel ek þér inn þriðja, ef þér þjóðár
falla at fjörlotum:
Horn ok Ruðr snúisk til Heljar meðan,
en þverri æ fyr þér.'

Gróa's Incantation

'Gróa's¹ Incantation',² which she chanted to her son³ when [she was] dead:

- 1.⁴ 'Awake, Gróa! Awake, good woman!
I awaken you at the doors of the dead,⁵
[to see] if you recall it, that you invited your boy
to come to your monument-mound!'⁶
2. 'What is it now which concerns my only son?
By what evil are you now overcome,
when you call on that mother [of yours],
when she's come to earth
and passed from people-homes?'⁷
3. 'An ugly playing-board⁸ the mischief-wise woman pushed before me,⁹
she who embraced my father;
there she commanded me to come, where she knows one can't come —
to meet Mengloð!'¹⁰
4. 'Long is¹¹ the journey, long are¹² the journey-ways,
long are¹³ men's desires,¹⁴
if it turns out that you attain your wish,
and Skuld¹⁵ then wends her way according to the fates.'
5. 'Chant me incantations, those which are good —
save, mother, your son!
I think I'll be wholly destroyed on the ways,
I seem to me too young a youth!'
6. 'That one I chant for you first,¹⁶ the one they call very useful,
the one Rindr chanted to Rani,¹⁷
so that you may thrust from your shoulder that which seems
to you terrible —
let yourself lead yourself!'
7. 'That one I chant for you second, if you must quest
unwillingly¹⁸ on ways:
may Urðr's locks(?)¹⁹ guard you on all sides,
when you're on your way.'
8. 'That one I chant for you as the third, if mighty rivers
fall to your life's betrayal(?)²⁰:
may Horn and Ruðr²¹ turn to Hel while [you pass by],
and always dwindle before you.'

9. 'Pann gel ek þér inn fjórða, ef þik fjándr standa,
görvir á gálvgvegi:
hugr þeim hverfi til handa þér,
ok snúisk þeim til sáttu sefi.
10. 'Pann gel ek þér inn fimmta, ef þér fjöturr verðr
borinn at boglimum:
Leifnis elda læt ek þér fyr legg of kveðinn,
ok stökkr þá láss af limum, en af fótum fjöturr.
11. 'Pann gel ek þér inn séttu, ef þú á sjó kómri
meira en menn viti: logn ok lögri
gangi þér í lúðr saman ok ljá i þér æ friðrjúgrar farar.
12. 'Pann gel ek þér inn sjaunda, ef þik sökja kómri
frost á fjalli há: hrævakulði
megin þínu holdi fara, ok haldir þér líki at liðum.
13. 'Pann gel ek þér inn átta, ef þik úti nemr
nótt á niflvegi, at því firr megi þér
til meins gøra — kristin dauð kona.
14. 'Pann gel ek þér inn njunda, ef þú við inn naddgöfga
orðum skiptir jötun:
máls ok manvits sé þér af Mímis hjarta
gnóga of gefit.
15. 'Farir þú nú æva þar er forað þykkir,
ok standit þér mein fyr munum;
á jarðfostum steini stóð ek innan dura,
meðan ek þér galdr gól!
16. 'Móður orð ber þú, mógr, héðan,
ok lát þér í brjósti búa!
Því nóga heill skaltu of aldr hafa,
meðan þú mín orð of mant!'

9. 'That one I chant for you as the fourth, if enemies beset you,
 prepared,²² on the gallows-way:²³
 may their heart come²⁴ into your hands,²⁵
 and their spirit incline²⁶ to reconciliations.'
10. 'That one I chant for you as the fifth, if a fetter is
 borne to²⁷ your bending limbs:²⁸
 I let Leifnir's flames(?)²⁹ be spoken over your leg,³⁰
 and the shackle then springs from your limbs, and the fetter from your feet.'
11. 'That one I chant for you as the sixth, if you come upon a sea
 greater than men may know: may calm and water
 go together for you in the mill³¹ and always grant you a peace-rich passage.'
12. 'That one I chant for you as the seventh, if frost comes seeking you
 on a high mountain: may corpse-coldness³²
 be unable to destroy your flesh, and may it not bind your body
 by the limbs(?).³³'
13. 'That one I chant for you as the eighth, if night [over]takes you
 outside on the mist-way,³⁴ so that she may be less able³⁵
 to do you harm — a dead Christian woman.³⁶'
14. 'That one I chant for you as the ninth, if you have to exchange words
 with the stud-ennobled³⁷ giant:³⁸
 may sufficient eloquence and commonsense be given to you
 from Mímir's heart.³⁹'
15. 'May you never now go where it's thought a danger,
 and may misfortune not stand in the way of your wishes;
 on an earth-fast⁴⁰ stone I stood within doors,⁴¹
 as long as I chanted incantations for you!'
16. 'Bear your mother's words hence, boy,
 and let them lodge in your breast!
 In that way you shall have enough luck throughout your life,
 as long as you remember my words!'

Fjölsvinnsmál

1. Útan garða hann sá upp um koma
 þursa þjóðar sjöt;
'Úrgar brautir árnaðu aptr heðan —
 áttattu hér, verndarvanr, veru!'
2. 'Hvat er þat flagða er stendr fyr forgorðum
 ok hvarflar um hættan loga?'
'Hvers þú leitar, eða hvers þú á leitum ert,
 eða hvat viltu, vinlauss, vita?'
3. 'Hvat er þat flagða er stendr fyr forgarði
 ok býðrat líðöndum lögð?'
'Sœmðarorða lauss hefir þú, seggr, of lifat,
 ok haltu heim héðan!'
4. 'Fjölsviðr ek heiti, en ek á fróðan sefa,
 þeygi em ek míns mildr matar;
innan garða þú kemr hér aldregi,
 ok dríf þú nú, vargr, *at vegi!*'
5. 'Augna gamans fýsir aptr fán,
 hvars hann getr svást at sjá;
garðar glóa mér þykkja of gullna sali —
 hér munda ek eðli una!'
6. 'Segðu mér hverjum ertu, sveinn, borinn,
 eða hverra ertu manna mógr?'
'Vindkaldr ek heiti, Várkaldr hét minn faðir,
 þess var Fjölkaldr faðir.'
7. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
 ok ek vilda vita:
hverr hér ræðr ok ríki hefir
 eign ok auðsolum?'
8. 'Mengloð of heitir, en hana móðir of gat
 við Svafrþorins syni;
hon hér ræðr ok ríki hefir
 eign ok auðsolum.'
9. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
 ok ek vilda vita:
hvat sú grind heitir, er með goðum sáat
 menn it meira forað.'

The Sayings of Fjölsvinnr

- 1.⁴² Outside the courts he⁴³ saw come up
the stronghold⁴⁴ of the people of giants;⁴⁵
'On moist ways take your message back⁴⁶ from here —
you'll have no refuge here, vagabond!'⁴⁷
2. 'What kind of ogress is it which stands before the forecourts
and moves to and fro through dangerous flame?'⁴⁸
'Whom are you searching for, or whom are you in search of,
or what, friendless one, do you want to know?'⁴⁹
3. 'What kind of ogress is it which stands before the forecourt
and doesn't offer hospitality to travellers?'
'Bereft of fitting words you have lived, fellow,
and be on your way home from here!'⁵⁰
4. 'I'm called Fjölsviðr,⁵¹ and I have a wise mind,
although I'm not at all generous with my food;
you'll never come inside these courts here,
and now be off,⁵² wolf,⁵³ on your way!'
5. 'Rare [is] the man repulsed by his eyes' delight(?),⁵⁴
wherever he gets to see something sweet;
the courts glow, it seems to me, around golden halls —
here I'd be happy with a homeland!'
6. 'Tell me, boy, from whom were you born,
or which men's⁵⁵ son are you?'
'I am called Vindkaldr,⁵⁶ my father was called Várkaldr,⁵⁷
[and] his father was Fjolkaldr.⁵⁸
7. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
who here controls and has power over
properties and treasure-halls?'⁵⁹
8. 'She's called Menglöð, and her mother begat her
with Svafrþorinn's son;⁶⁰
she here controls and has power over
properties and treasure-halls.'
9. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
what that gate is called, a greater danger than which
people haven't seen among the gods.'

10. 'Prymgjöll hon heitir, en hana þrír gerðu,
Sólblinda synir;
fjöturr fastr verðr við faranda hvern
er hana hefr frá hliði.'
11. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þík fregna mun
ok ek vilda vita:
hvat sá garðr heitir er með goðum sáat
menn it meira forað.'
12. 'Gastropnir heitir, en ek hann gørvan hefk
ór Leirbrimis limum;
svá hefik studdan at hann standa man
æ, meðan óld lifir.'
13. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þík fregna mun
ok ek vilda vita:
hvat þeir garnar heita er gífrari hefik
þonga fyrr í löndum litit.'
14. 'Gífr heitir annarr, en Geri annarr,
ef þu vilt þat vita;
varðir ellifu, er þeir varða,
unz rjúfask regin.'
15. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þík fregna mun
ok ek vilda vita:
hvárt sé manna nökkut, þat er megi inn koma,
meðan sókndarfir sofa.'
16. 'Missvefni mikit var þeim mjók of lagit,
síðan þeim var varzla vituð;
annarr of nætr sefr, en annarr of daga,
ok kemsk þá vætr, ef þá kom.'
17. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þík fregna mun
ok ek vilda vita:
hvárt sé matar nökkut, þat er menn hafi,
ok hlaupi inn, meðan þeir eta.'
18. 'Vængbráðir tvær liggja í Viðófnis liðum,
ef þú vilt þat vita;
þat eitt er svá matar, at þeim menn of gefi,
ok hlaupi inn, meðan þeir eta.'

10. 'It's called Þrymgjoll,⁶¹ and three made it,
the sons of Sólblindir;⁶²
a firm fetter will be forthcoming for every traveller
who raises it from the gateway.'⁶³
11. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
what this courtyard is called, a greater danger than which
people haven't seen among the gods.'
12. 'It's called Gastropnir,⁶⁴ and I've made it
from Leirbrimir's limbs;⁶⁵
I've supported it,⁶⁶ so that it will stand
always, as long as the world lives.'
13. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
what those dogs are called, than which I've seen
none fiercer before in lands.'⁶⁷
14. 'One is called Gifr,⁶⁸ and the other Geri,⁶⁹
if you want to know it;
eleven women, when they guard(?),⁷⁰
until the powers are ripped apart.'⁷¹
15. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
whether there is anyone who can come inside,
while the attack-daring ones⁷² sleep.'
16. 'Much-opposed sleep⁷³ was strictly laid down for them,
after the watch was assigned to them;
one sleeps by night,⁷⁴ and the other by day,⁷⁵
and no one comes [past], if he came then.'⁷⁶
17. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
whether there's any meat,⁷⁷ that which men may bring,⁷⁸
and [then] run in, while they⁷⁹ eat.'
18. 'Two wing-morsels lie in Viðófnir's⁸⁰ limbs,
if you want to know it:
that's the only meat that men may give them,
and [then] run in, while they eat.'

19. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
ok ek vilda vita:
hvat þat barr heitir er breiðask
um lönd oll limar.'
20. 'Mímameiðr hann heitir, en þat fáir vita,
af hverjum rótum renn;
við þat hann fellr, er fæstan varir —
flærat hann eldr né járn.'
21. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
ok ek vilda vita:
hvat af móði verðr þess ins mæra viðar,
er hann flærat eldr né járn.'
22. 'Út af hans aldni skal á eld bera,
fyr kélisjúkar konur;
útar hverfa þats þær innar skyli —
sá er hann með mōnum mjótuðr.'
23. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
ok ek vilda vita:
hvat sá hani heitir er sitr í inum háva viði —
allr hann við gull glóir!'
24. 'Viðófnir hann heitir, en hann stendr Veðrglesi,
á meiðs kvistum Míma;
einum ekka þryngr hann orófsaman
Surtar Sinmǫru.'
25. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
ok ek vilda vita:
hvárt sé vápna nökkt, þat er knegi Viðófnir fyr
hníga á Heljar sjöt.'
26. 'Lævateinn heitir, en hann gørði Loptr rúinn
fyr nágrendr neðan;
í segjárns keri liggr hann hjá Sinmǫru,
ok halda Njarðlásar níu.'
27. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
ok ek vilda vita:
hvárt aptr kemr, sá er eptir ferr
ok vill þann tein taka.'

19. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
what the tree is called which spreads
its limbs across all lands.'
20. 'It's called Mímameiðr,⁸¹ but few know it,⁸²
from what roots it runs;⁸³
it will fall by that which the fewest⁸⁴ expect —
neither fire nor iron will flay it.'
21. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
what comes forth from the spirit(?) of that glorious tree,
since neither fire nor iron flay it.'
22. 'One must expose some of its fruit to a fire,
for womb-sick(?)⁸⁵ women;
further out goes that which they should [keep] further in —
that one, it's a meter of fate among men.'⁸⁶
23. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
what the cockerel is called which sits in the high tree⁸⁷ —
he's all glowing with gold!'
24. 'He's called Viðófnir, and he stands on Veðrglasir,⁸⁸
on twigs of the tree⁸⁹ of Mími;
with one sorrow he oppresses immeasurably⁹⁰
Surtr's Sinmara.'⁹¹
25. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
whether there's any weapon by which Viðófnir can [be made]
to sink⁹² into Hel's seats.'⁹³
26. 'It's called Lævateinn,⁹⁴ but Loptr⁹⁵ caused it to be plucked
down beneath corpse-gates,⁹⁶
in a chest of tough-iron⁹⁷ it lies besides Sinmara,
and nine Njörðr⁹⁸-locks guard it.'
27. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
whether he'll come back, the one who goes after
and wants to take that twig.'

28. 'Aptr mun koma, sá er eptir ferr
 ok vill þann tein taka,
 ef þat foerir sem fáir eigu
 Eiri Auglasis.'
29. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
 ok ek vilda vita:
 hvárt sé mæta nökkut, þat er menn hafi,
 ok verðr því in fólva gýgr fegin.'
30. 'Ljósan ljá skaltu í lúðr bera —
 þann er liggr í Viðófnis völum —
 Sínþoru at selja, áðr hon söm telisk
 vápni til vígs at ljá.'
31. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
 ok ek vilda vita:
 hvat sá salr heitir er slunginn er
 vísum vafrloga.'
32. 'Lýr hann heitir, en hann lengi mun
 á brodds oddi bifask;
 auðranns þess munu um aldr hafa
 frétt eina fírar.'
33. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
 ok ek vilda vita:
 hverr þat görði er ek fyr garð sēk
 innan, ásmaga.'
34. 'Uni ok Íri, Bari ok Óri,
 Varr ok Vegdrasill;
 Dóri ok Úri, Dellingr, Atvarðr,
 Liðskjálfr, Loki.'
35. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
 ok ek vilda vita:
 hvat þat bjarg heitir, er ek sé brúði á
 þjóðmæra þruma.'
36. 'Lyfjaberg þat heitir, en þat hefir lengi verit
 sjúkri ok sárri gaman;
 heil verðr hver, þótt hafi árs sótt,
 ef þat klífr, kona.'

28. 'He'll come back, the one who goes after
and wants to take that twig,
if he brings that which few possess⁹⁹
to the Eir¹⁰⁰ of Auglasir.'¹⁰¹
29. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
whether there's any treasure, that which men may have,
and in which the pale giantess¹⁰² will be pleased.'
30. 'A radiant sickle you must bear into the mill¹⁰³ —
the one which lies in Viðófnir's knuckles¹⁰⁴ —
to give it to Simmara, before she reckons herself willing
to lend¹⁰⁵ you the weapon¹⁰⁶ for the killing.'
31. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
what the hall is called which is cast about
with discerning flicker-flame.'¹⁰⁷
32. 'It's called Lýr,¹⁰⁸ and long will it tremble
on the point of a spike;¹⁰⁹
of this treasure-house,¹¹⁰ throughout the ages,
humans will have only hearsay.'
33. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
who of the sons of the Æsir¹¹¹ made that
which I see within the enclosure.'¹¹²
- 34.¹¹³ 'Uni¹¹⁴ and Íri,¹¹⁵ Bari¹¹⁶ and Óri,¹¹⁷
Varr¹¹⁸ and Vegdrasill,¹¹⁹
Dóri¹²⁰ and Úri,¹²¹ Dellingr,¹²² Atvarðr,¹²³
Liðskjálfr,¹²⁴ Loki.'¹²⁵
35. 'Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
what that rock is called, on which I see a most renowned
bride¹²⁶ remaining quietly.'
36. 'It's called Lyfjaberg,¹²⁷ and it's long been
a pleasure to the poorly [woman] and the pained [woman];
every woman becomes sound, even if she has fertility's sickness,¹²⁸
if she scales it.'

37. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
ok ek vilda vita:
hvat þær meyjar heita er fyr Menglaðar knjám
syngja sáttar saman.'
38. 'Hlíf heitir *ein*, qnnur Hlífpursa,
þriðja Þjóðvarta,
Björt ok Blíð, Blíðr, Fríð,
Eir ok Aurboða.'
39. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
ok ek vilda vita:
hvart þær bjarga þeim er blóta þær,
ef gørask þarfar þess.'
40. 'Bjarga svinnar hvar er menn blóta þær
á stallhelgum stað;
ei svá hátt forað kemr at hölða sonum,
hvern þær ór nauðum nema.'
41. 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, er ek þik fregna mun
ok ek vilda vita:
hvárt sé manna nøkkut, þat er knegi á Menglaðar
svásum armi sofa.'
42. 'Vætr er þat manna, er knegi á Menglaðar
svásum armi sofa,
nema Svipdagr einn — honum var sú in sólbjarta
brúðr at kván of kveðin.'
43. 'Hrittu á hurðir! Láttu hlið rúm!
Hér máttu Svipdag sjá!
En þó vita far ef vilja muni
Mengloð mitt gaman!'
44. 'Heyrðu, Mengloð! Hér er maðr kominn,
gakk þú á gest sjá!
Hundar fagna, hús hefir upp lokisk —
hygg ek at Svipdagr sé!'
45. 'Horskir hrafnar skulu þér á hám gálga
slíta sjónir ór,
ef þú þat lýgr, at hér sé langt kominn
moogr til minna sala!'

37. ‘Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
what those maidens are called who sing¹²⁹ together
peacefully before Mengloð’s knees.’
38. ‘One¹³⁰ is called Hlíf,¹³¹ the second Hlífþursa,¹³²
the third Þjóðvarta,¹³³
Björ¹³⁴ and Blíð,¹³⁵ Blíðr,¹³⁶ Fríð,¹³⁷
Eir¹³⁸ and Aurboda.¹³⁹’
39. ‘Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
whether they protect those who sacrifice to them,
if there should be need for this.’
40. ‘The wise ones offer protection wherever people sacrifice to them
at an altar-holy place,¹⁴⁰
danger doesn’t come upon the sons of men so severely¹⁴¹
[that] they [can’t] free¹⁴² each one from constraints.’
41. ‘Tell me, Fjölsviðr, that which I will ask you
and which I would know:
whether there’s anyone who can sleep
in Mengloð’s sweet arms.¹⁴³’
42. ‘There’s no one at all who can sleep
in Mengloð’s sweet arms,
except Svipdagr¹⁴⁴ alone — for him was that sun-bright bride
appointed as wife.’
43. ‘Push open the doors! Give the gate room!¹⁴⁵
Here you can see Svipdagr!
But yet go to find out whether Mengloð will
wish my pleasure!’
44. ‘Hear, Mengloð! A man has come here,
go to see the guest!
The hounds rejoice, the house has opened itself up —
I think that it’s Svipdagr!’
45. ‘Astute ravens shall tear out your eyes
on a high gallows,
if you’re lying about it, that the boy has come
a long way to my halls!’

46. 'Hvaðan þú fórt? Hvaðan þú fór gørðir?
 Hvé þík hétu hjú?
 At ætt ok nafni skal ek jartegn vita,
 ef ek var þér kván of kveðin!'
47. 'Svipdagr ek heiti, Sólbjartr hét minn faðir,
 þaðan rákumk vindar kalda vega;
 Urðar orði kveðr engi maðr,
 þótt þat sé við löst lagit!'
48. 'Vel þú nú kominn! Hefi ek minn vilja beðit —
 fylgja skal kveðju koss!
 Forkunnar sýn mun flestan glaða,
 hvars hefir við annan ást.'
49. 'Lengi ek sat ljúfu bergi á,
 beið ek þín dœgr ok daga;
 nú þat varð, er ek vætt hefi,
 at þú ert kominn, mógr, til minna sala!'
50. 'Prár hafðar er ek hefi til þíns gamans,
 en þú til míns munar!
 Nú er þat satt, er vit slíta skulum
 ævi ok aldri saman!'

46. 'Whence have you come? Whence did you make your journey?
What do your family call you?
I must have¹⁴⁶ proof of your lineage and name,
if I was appointed to be your wife!'
47. 'I'm called Svipdagr, my father was called Sóljartr,¹⁴⁷
from there I wandered the wind's cold ways,¹⁴⁸
no one [gain]says¹⁴⁹ Urðr's word,¹⁵⁰
even if it's laid down with injustice!'
48. 'You're welcome now! I've got my wish —
a kiss shall accompany the greeting!
The sight of one's desire will gladden most [people],¹⁵¹
wherever one has love for another.'
49. 'Long I sat on the beloved rock,¹⁵²
I waited for you for days¹⁵³ and days;
now it's come to pass, that which I've hoped for,
that you've come, boy, to my halls!'
- 50.¹⁵⁴ 'I've suffered pains for your love-play,
and you [have likewise] for desire of me!
Now it's [come] true,¹⁵⁵ since we two shall tear through¹⁵⁶
life and age¹⁵⁷ together!'

Textual Apparatus to *Svipdagsmál*

The contents of the following textual apparatus to *Svipdagsmál* are highly selective, noting only the most significant changes from the two primary manuscripts, both of which date from c. 1675: Rask 21 a (**Ra**), pp. 56–58 and Stockholm Papp. 15 8vo (**St**), pp. 50–56. For fuller details of emendations and variant readings, see the editions by Bugge and Robinson listed in the Further Reading section.

Gróugaldr

3/2 skaut] **Ra, St** skauts þú

3/5 kvæmtki] **Ra, St** kveðki

3/6 Mengloðu] **Ra** menglauðum, **St** mengloðum

7/6 sinnum] **Ra, St** sman

8/2 þjóðár] **Ra, St** þioþir

9/4] hverfi] **Ra, St** hryggvi

9/5 til] **Ra, St** absent

9/5 þér] **Ra, St** þér mætti

10/2 verðr] **Ra, St** verða

10/4 Leifnis elda] **Ra** leifins elda, **St** Leifnis eldu

11/6 ljái] **Ra, St** ljá

12/6 þér] **Ra, St** or

12/6 liki] **Ra, St** lik

13/4 megi] **Ra, St** megi at

14/1 inn] **Ra, St** absent

14/5 af] **Ra, St** á

14/5 Mímis] **Ra** mimis, **St** minniss

15/1 Farir] **Ra, St** far

15/2 þar er] **Ra, St** þér

16/4 Því] **Ra, St** þi

Fjölsvinnsmál

4/6 at] **Ra, St** af

7/6 auðsolum] **Ra, St** auþsaulun

8/3 Svafþorins] **Ra, St** Svafur þorins

8/6 auðsolum] **Ra** auþaulun, **St** auþsaulun

9/4 sú] **Ra, St** absent

10/4 *fjöturr*] **Ra, St** *fjöturar*

11/5 *sáat*] **Ra, St** *sjáat*

13/5 *gífrari hefik*] **Ra, St** *gifur rekar*

13/6 *qnga fyrr í löndum lítit*] Manuscript readings vary here, but it appears that none is comprehensible. I take the present emendation, and that of 13/5, from the edition by Bugge. For 13/5–6, Robinson's emended text reads *er gífrir rekask / t giorþa fyrir londin lim t*, only the first part of which he translates, as 'that roam ravenous ...'.

16/2 *of*] **Ra, St** absent

16/6 *kemsk*] **Ra** *komt*, **St** *kemt*

16/6 *ef*] **Ra, St** *of*

18/1 *Vængbráðir*] so **Ra; St** *Vegnbraðir*

18/2 *liðum*] **Ra** *liðum*, **St** *viðum*

18/6 *hlaupi*] **Ra** *laupa*, **St** *laufa*

20/6 *flærat*] **St** *flær at*, **Ra** *flær*

21/6 *flærat*] **Ra, St** *flær ei*

21/6 *eldr*] **Ra, St** *eld*

22/5 *bats*] **Ra** *bess*, **St** *poss*

24/2 *Veðrglasí*] **Ra** *veðir-/glasí*, **St** *veðir glasi*

24/6 *Sinmøru*] **Ra** *sinn mantu*, **St** *sinn mautu*

26/1 *Lævateinn*] **Ra, St** *Hevateinn*

32/1 *Lýr*] **Ra, St** *Hyr*

33/5 *sék*] **Ra, St** *sok*

34/4 *Úri*] **St** *Uri*, **Ra** *Óri*

36/1 *Lyffaberg*] **Ra** *Hyfvia berg*, **St** *Hyfua ber*

36/3 *sjúkri*] **Ra, St** *sjúk*

38/1 *ein*] **Ra, St** absent

40/1 *Bjarga svinnar*] **Ra, St** *Sumur*

48/6 *hvars*] **Ra, St** *hvers*

49/6 *ert kominn*] **Ra, St** *ert aptr kominn* 'have come back'

50/6 *ok*] **Ra, St** absent

Notes to the Translation

- 1 The name *Gróa*, which is also a sword-name, relates to the verb *grúa* ‘to grow’ or ‘to heal’. *SnESkáld* (I, 17, p. 22) tells how a seeress called Gróa, wife of Aurvandill the Bold, began chanting incantations to loosen a piece of whetstone in Þórr’s skull, an incident mentioned earlier in *Haust*.
- 2 In this title the multiple incantations described in the poem are apparently treated collectively.
- 3 Svipdagr.
- 4 This stanza is spoken by Svipdagr, Gróa’s son.
- 5 I.e., at her grave.
- 6 I.e., a burial site topped by stones.
- 7 I.e., the world of living humans. There might be a pun on ‘(magical) song homes’.
- 8 A metaphor for a dreadful challenge.
- 9 I.e., presented me with. The woman is Svipdagr’s evil stepmother. Cf. the giantess Skaði, Freyr’s stepmother in *FSk.*, who commands Skírnir to find out why Freyr is so upset and thereby sets in motion Skírnir’s dangerous quest for Gerðr.
- 10 ‘Torc/Necklace Glad (One)’. Perhaps compare Freyja’s possession of the *Brísingamen* ‘Torc of the Brísingar’.
- 11 Or ‘will be’.
- 12 Or ‘will be’.
- 13 Or ‘will be’.
- 14 Cf. *FSk.* 42.
- 15 One of the Nornir, supernatural females who govern people’s fates. Her name is interpretable as ‘That Which Shall Happen’.
- 16 The actual words of this incantation, and the following ones, are not given.
- 17 Rindr is the mother of Váli, the son of Óðinn who will avenge Baldr’s death, according to *BDr.* 11. Her name (perhaps earlier **Vrindr*) is of uncertain meaning. She might be a giantess, but is included among the goddesses in *SnEGylf* (36, p. 30). *Rani* ‘Snout’ is otherwise unknown, but the name suggests an unattractive, perhaps giantish or animalistic figure. It has also been suggested that *Rani* might be a name of Óðinn, who has a similar-looking alias in *Hrani* ‘Blusterer’. Consequently, some commentators have proposed that the event mentioned here might relate to the story behind the words *seið Yggr til Rindar* ‘Yggr [Óðinn] practised *seiðr* [feminine magic] to [get?] Rindr’ in the tenth-century *Sigurðardrápa* of Kormákr Qgmundarson (*SnESkáld*, I, 2, p. 9; *SPSMA* III, 277). A version of what may be essentially the same story is told at length in *GD* (3.4.1–8, 13). It describes how a Russian princess called *Rinda* (cf. *Rindr*) rebuffed the amorous advances of a disguised Othinus (Óðinn) by hitting and shoving him, before he, after earlier afflicting her with a piece of bark inscribed with spells, succeeded in binding and raping her. However, not only was *Rinda* ultimately unsuccessful in rebuffing Othinus (who calls himself *Rosterus* and *Wecha*, not *Rani*), but her initially successful rejections of him did not involve magic. Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, ed., *Eddukvæði*, Íslenzk fornrit, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 2014), II, 438 emends *þann góð Rindr Rani* to *þann góð Rindi Rani* ‘the one Rani [Óðinn] chanted to Rindr’, but this raises the objection

that Óðinn wanted to get close to Rindr, not thrust her away. Another possibility is that the name is not *Rani* but *Ráni* and refers to Rán, the sea-giantess who drowns sailors; this would suit the context of Gróa's offering of protection for her son on his perilous journey (cf. Gg. 8 and 11 especially), but would be metrically abnormal because the first syllable of a disyllabic word at the end of a 'full line' of *ljóðaháttir* is normally short.

- 18 Or perhaps 'despairingly'.
- 19 *Urðr* 'That Which Has Happened' or 'Fate' is one of the Nornir; see *Vsp.* 19–20. Her *lokur* 'locks(?)', or *lok(k)ur* 'enticements/incantations(?)', are presumably some sort of protective magic. They might relate to a (similarly obscure) magical song called *Varðlok(k)ur* which attracts spirits when recited by a woman in chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga rauða* 'The Saga of Eiríkr the Red'.
- 20 I.e., in such a way as to threaten your life.
- 21 These are presumably the names of mythical rivers; they might mean 'Horn' and 'Ruddy One'. Cf. *Hrønn* and *Hrið*, which are among the rivers that 'fall near men, and fall from here to Hel', in *Grm.* 28.
- 22 I.e., armed and ready; this describes the enemies.
- 23 I.e., on the way to the gallows; presumably, these would be people intent on hanging Svipdagr, or at least on bringing about his death in some way.
- 24 Literally, 'turn'.
- 25 I.e., into your keeping, your power.
- 26 Literally, 'turn'.
- 27 I.e., brought to and placed on.
- 28 Literally, 'bowed/curved limbs'; alternatively, *bóglimum* 'arms' (and/or 'legs'?).
- 29 Possibly the name of an incantation, perhaps one deemed capable of melting metal, but the identities of *Leifnir* (or *Leifinn*) and his flames (fiery breath?) are obscure. *Leifnir* is elsewhere a poetic term for a ship and the name of a sea-king; it also appears in a poetic term for a sword, *Leifnis-grand* 'Leifnir's hurt'. Many editors, however, emend *Leifnis elda* to *leysigaldr* 'a loosing incantation'.
- 30 Literally, (bone of the) leg or arm.
- 31 Literally, 'the frame of a hand-mill', but this is a metaphor for the 'milling' waters of a whirlpool. The incantation promises to protect Svipdagr against them. Cf. *Fj.* 30.
- 32 I.e., deadly cold.
- 33 The text of this stanza's last half-line is problematic and its meaning is uncertain.
- 34 I.e., a misty or dark road, perhaps with a hint of the road to *Nifflhel* 'Dark/Mist Hell'.
- 35 I.e., that she may unable.
- 36 The reason for the attribution of potential harm to a dead Christian woman is obscure.
- 37 Or 'spear-ennobled'. If 'stud/nail-ennobled' is correct, it possibly alludes to the Pole Star as the 'stud' about which the sky was thought to revolve; cf. *Hdl.* 35.
- 38 This is presumably *Fj.*'s *Fjölsviðr*/*Fjölsvinnr*, who might be Mímir/Mími incognito.
- 39 On Mímir, a giant of wisdom, see *Vsp.* 28. Not all editors, however, accept that this stanza mentions Mímir, as manuscript readings vary and the text is therefore uncertain.
- 40 I.e., a stone fixed in the ground.

- 41 I.e., the notional ‘doors of the dead’—the entrance to the stone and to the world of the dead—mentioned in *Gg.* 1.
- 42 *Fj.* begins with Svipdagr outside Menglǫð’s fortress, having completed most of his journey.
- 43 I.e., Svipdagr.
- 44 Literally, ‘seats’.
- 45 Or *pursa þjóðar sjöt* ‘the palace of the people of giants’. Some manuscripts have *pursa broþir* ‘(the) brother of giants’.
- 46 Or simply ‘Go back’.
- 47 Literally, ‘protection-wanting one’. These words are addressed to the (as yet unnamed) Svipdagr by a giant (probably), who assumes the visitor wants shelter.
- 48 The stronghold is apparently surrounded by flame; cf. *FSk.* 8–9. This question is asked by the undaunted Svipdagr; it appears insulting, as he is addressing a male.
- 49 Although sense can be made of the manuscript order, editors often reorder *Fj.* 1 and 2 as follows: 1/1–3, 2/1–3; 2/4–6, 1/4–6.
- 50 The speaker probably takes exception partly to being called an ogress. Alternatively, the second half of this stanza might be attributed to Svipdagr.
- 51 ‘Very Wise/Swift One’, a variant of *Fjolsvinnr*. Here it is probably the name of a giant (possibly an alias of Mími), though elsewhere in Old Norse texts it is the name of a dwarf and an alias of Óðinn.
- 52 Literally, ‘drive’.
- 53 Or ‘criminal’.
- 54 The precise sense of this line, which may be partly corrupt, is uncertain.
- 55 I.e., his male ancestors.
- 56 ‘Wind Cold’.
- 57 ‘Spring Cold’.
- 58 ‘Very Cold’.
- 59 I.e., either ‘treasures’ or ‘richly adorned halls’; cf. *Fj.* 32.
- 60 The identities of *Svafþorinn* ‘Sleep-Daring One(?)’ and his son are unknown.
- 61 Roughly ‘Clashing Yell’.
- 62 ‘Sun-Blind(ed) One’; he is otherwise unknown, but his name suggests a dwarf or a giant.
- 63 I.e., in order to open it.
- 64 The meaning of *Gastropnir* (or *Gastrópnir*) is uncertain, perhaps ‘Guest Pincher’.
- 65 *Leirbrimir* means ‘Clay Brimir’, *Brimir* being a giant-name formed from *brim* ‘surf’. The ‘limbs’ of Leirbrimir are presumably clay. In Indo-European mythologies, the ‘house/enclosure of clay’ appears to be a metaphor for the grave.
- 66 I.e., with pillars.
- 67 The conclusion of this stanza is conjectural, being based on a speculative emendation.
- 68 ‘Savage One’.
- 69 ‘Ravenous One’ (also the name of one of Óðinn’s wolves). If Gastropnir represents the grave, part of the Otherworldly land of the dead, Gífr and Geri may be hellhounds or at least akin to such creatures.

- 70 This line is evidently corrupt, but no emendation commands much confidence. Perhaps emend *varðir ellifu* ‘eleven women’ (only ten women are named in *Fj.* 37–38) to *verðir ellifu* ‘eleven guards’, the intended sense being that, when these two dogs are guarding, it is as if there are eleven guards. But other suggested emendations have the dogs guarding for eternity (*at eilifu*) or guarding the gods’ remedy for old age (*ellilyf*).
- 71 I.e., at Ragnarok.
- 72 I.e., the guard-dogs.
- 73 I.e., alternate sleeping patterns.
- 74 Literally, ‘during nights’.
- 75 Literally, ‘during days’.
- 76 I.e., at any time, day or night.
- 77 Or ‘food’.
- 78 Literally, ‘have’.
- 79 I.e., the guard-dogs.
- 80 Identified as a cockerel in *Fj.* 23–24. *Viðófnir* may mean ‘Wood/Tree Crower’; alternatively, *Viðófnir* could mean ‘Wide Crower’ (i.e., ‘One Whose Crowing Is Widely Heard’).
- 81 ‘Mími’s Branch/Tree’, *Mími* possibly being another name for the giant Mímir.
- 82 This line lacks alliteration in the Old Norse, unless the second half is emended to *en þat mangi veit* ‘and no one knows it’.
- 83 Cf. *Háv.* 138, *Grm.* 31.
- 84 I.e., no one.
- 85 Or ‘hysterical’. If, as seems more likely, the reference is to women with uterine problems, perhaps smoke from the tree’s fruit acted as an abortifacient. Alternatively, if the women are ‘hysterical’ for some other reason, perhaps the smoke enabled them to reveal, and thereby relieve themselves of, disturbing emotions which, Fjölsviðr thinks, it would be better for them to keep hidden. Cf. *Fj.* 36.
- 86 This obscure line might identify Mímameiðr with the *mjötvið mæran* ‘glorious measure-tree’ of *Vsp.* 2, which is better known as the world-tree Yggdrasill. Here the fate it metes out is perhaps the abortion or premature birth of a child.
- 87 Presumably Mímameiðr.
- 88 This emended name could mean either ‘Weather/Wind Shining One’ or ‘Wether Shining One’; the second possibility is conceivable because Heimdallr, whose name invites identification with the world-tree, is identifiable as a white ram-god. Cf. Glasir, a mythological tree or grove with golden foliage that stands before Valhöll in *SnESkáld* (I, 34, p. 41; 45, p. 60).
- 89 Or ‘branch’.
- 90 Or possibly ‘continuously’. The ‘sorrow’ is perhaps the knowledge (crowed by Viðófnir?) that she would be robbed and, it may be, killed by Svipdagr.
- 91 *Surtr* ‘Black One’ is the name of a fire-demon or fire-giant who will kill Freyr at Ragnarok; see *Vsp.* 51–52. That Sinmara is a giantess is indicated by *Fj.* 29; she is probably Surtr’s wife or daughter. Her name (here emended) is interpretable as ‘Sinew Mara’ or perhaps ‘Perpetual/Great Mara’, but might originally have been **Sindrmara* ‘Cinder Mare’. A *mara*

- 'mare' (cognate with English 'nightmare') was a kind of physically suppressive female monster.
- 92 I.e., in death.
- 93 I.e., residences, halls with seats. Hel is here either the underworld land of the dead or its female ruler.
- 94 'Twig of Treacheries/Harms', an obscure name for a weapon. This interpretation relies on an emendation of the manuscript reading *Hevateinn* to give the line expected alliteration; cf. the comparable emendations *Lýr* and *Lyfjaberg* in *Fj.* 32, 36. As a weapon, Lævateinn could well be a sword, a 'twig-sword'; cf. Skírnir's *gambanteinn* 'tribute-twig' in *FSk.* 32, and *Mistletein* 'Mistletoe', another 'twig-sword' of Norse mythology. Also noteworthy is the term *læva lundr* 'grove of deceits' in an obscure passage of *Haustr.* (11) concerning Loki and his instigation of the abduction of the goddess Iðunn to the land of giants (*SPSMA* III, 447–48). Note, too, the reference to the 'treachery (*læ*)-blended sword', which Guðrún explains in relation to fire and burning, in *Gör.* II 38.
- 95 'Lofty', an alias of Loki.
- 96 These gates presumably guard an underworld of the dead.
- 97 Some editors treat *segjárn* as a proper name.
- 98 Njørðr was a god of the sea, which, together with other evidence, suggests that Lævateinn was locked within a submerged chest, probably beneath a maelstrom. Perhaps the nine locks relate to the sea-giant's daughters, who personified waves.
- 99 I.e., no one possesses.
- 100 *Eir* 'Mercy' is elsewhere the name of a goddess, but here it seems to denote the giantess Sinmara. Cf. *Fj.* 38.
- 101 'Mud-Shining One', a mythical place-name.
- 102 Sinmara.
- 103 I.e., whirlpool; cf. *Gg.* 11. The sickle is obscure.
- 104 I.e., foot-joints, in which case Viðófnir is possibly imagined as holding the sickle with one or both of its feet. Another possible translation is 'rods', i.e., perhaps, bones or feather-shafts.
- 105 Or 'grant'.
- 106 I.e., Lævateinn.
- 107 Cf. *FSk.* 8–9.
- 108 The manuscript reading *Hyr* might be interpreted as *Hyrr* 'Fire' or *Hýrr* 'Fitting for a Household', but with neither of these readings does the line alliterate conventionally; this shortcoming favours emendation to *Lýr* 'Pollack/Whitefish/Fish'; similarly desirable emendations of *H-* to *L-* produce *Lævateinn* and *Lyfjaberg* in *Fj.* 26, 36. For my thoughts on the possible significance of *Lýr*, an ostensibly bizarre name for a hall, see Pettit, *The Waning Sword*, pp. 203–05.
- 109 Possibly the tip of a sword or knife (Lævateinn?), or a spearhead.
- 110 The compound *auðrann* (*auð-* + *rann* 'house, hall') occurs only here. Its likely primary sense is 'treasure-house' or 'richly adorned house' (cf. *auðsglum* 'treasure-halls' in *Fj.* 7, 8), with the first element being the combining form of masc. *auðr* 'riches, wealth, treasure'. But *auð-* is ambiguous, perhaps deliberately. It could also be a combining form of fem. *auðr* 'fate, destiny' (also attested as a fem. proper name), in which case it would be a 'destiny-house', one that contained Svipdagr's destined bride, Mengloð (alias *Auðr*?). There may also be

an ironic nod to *auð-* ‘easy’, given the inaccessibility and puzzling nature of this ‘easy house’. Finally, a deliberately misleading suggestion of an ‘empty house’ (*auðr* ‘empty’) is conceivable, to dissuade Svipdagr from going there.

- 111 The *Æsir* are the gods. Their ‘sons’ in this case apparently are, or include, dwarves.
- 112 Alternatively, ‘who made that which I see within the enclosure of the sons of the *Æsir*’.
- 113 Most, if not all, of the names in this stanza appear to be of dwarves.
- 114 Perhaps ‘Calm/Satisfied One’.
- 115 Perhaps ‘Irish One’.
- 116 Perhaps ‘Eager One’ or ‘Rough One’; alternatively, *Bári* (perhaps from *bára* ‘wave, billow’).
- 117 Perhaps ‘Quarrelsome One’ or ‘Raver’; this name also appears amid lists of dwarf-names in *SnEGylf* (14, p. 16). The Old Norse line’s alliteration appears faulty, but it could be corrected by placing *Óri* before *Bari*.
- 118 ‘Wary One’. Two smiths of the name appear in chapters 4–5 of *Hrólfssaga kraka*.
- 119 ‘Way Steed’.
- 120 This name, which possibly relates to modern Icelandic *dór* ‘auger’, ‘iron drill’, also appears in a list of dwarf-names in *SnEGylf* (14, p. 16).
- 121 The name might relate to Modern Icelandic *úr* ‘sparks (from iron working)’.
- 122 ‘Gleaming One’; Dellingr is the father of *Dagr* ‘Day’ in *Vm.* 25; Dellingr’s ‘doors’ are mentioned in *Háv.* 160.
- 123 This name possibly arose as a corruption of **at var þar* ‘(Dellingr) was thereat’ or **ok var þar* ‘(Dellingr) was also there’.
- 124 Ostensibly ‘Limb/Joint-Shaking One’, but Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, *Eddukvæði*, II, 447 discerns two separate names: *Liðski*, *Alfr*; see also the next footnote.
- 125 Elsewhere, *Loki* is the name of the Norse trickster-god. However, the last line should perhaps be emended to *liðskjálfar loki* ‘(as) troop-shelf’s finisher’, in which case Dellingr would be identified as the smith who completed the work. If so, there may originally have been only nine (the typically ‘perfect’ Germanic number), not twelve, smiths in this list: Uni, Íri, Bari, Óri, Varr, Vegdrasill, Dóri, Úri and Dellingr.
- 126 Presumably Mengloð.
- 127 ‘Rock of Healing Herbs/Medicines’ (cf. *Fj.* 49); with the emendation of *H-* to *L-* in *Lyfjaberg*, cf. *Lævateinn* and *Lýr* in *Fj.* 26, 32. The presence of this medicinal rock, and the maidens of the next stanza, in an Otherworld with attributes suggestive of an enclosure of the dead is curious; perhaps the idea is that those who scale it return to health/life by climbing away from the land of the dead.
- 128 I.e., even if she is barren. Cf. *Fj.* 22.
- 129 Instead of *syngja* ‘sing’, some manuscripts have *sitja* ‘sit’.
- 130 *Ein* ‘one’ is supplied editorially for both metre and sense.
- 131 ‘Cover’, ‘Shelter’.
- 132 Interpreted as *hlífþursa*, the sense would be ‘protection of giants’, but *Hlífbursa* is probably a corruption of some other name; some editors emend to *Hlífbarsa*, which might mean roughly ‘Protective Fighter’. Cf. *Lif ok Líffrasir* in *Vm.* 45.

- 133 This name also appears corrupt. Some editors emend *Pjóðvara*; the element *pjóð-* means 'people', 'nation', but sometimes it serves merely as an intensifier, in which case the emended name might mean 'Very Wary One'.
- 134 'Bright One'.
- 135 'Blithe One'. But in view of the very similar following name, perhaps emend to *Blik* 'Shining One'.
- 136 'Blithe One'. Perhaps emend to *Blíð*.
- 137 'Pretty One'.
- 138 'Mercy'; also the name of a goddess and a valkyrie, and applied generically to Simmara in *Fj.* 28.
- 139 'Mud Bidder/Offerer'; elsewhere a giantess, the wife of Gymir and mother of Gerðr.
- 140 I.e., a place made holy by the presence of an altar.
- 141 Literally, 'highly'.
- 142 Literally, 'take'.
- 143 Literally, 'arm'.
- 144 Probably 'Swooping Day' or 'Fleeting Day'.
- 145 I.e., room to open.
- 146 Literally, 'know'.
- 147 'Sun-Bright (One)'. Earlier, Svipdagr had named his father *Várkaldr* 'Spring Cold'. In *Fj.* 42 Mengloð is in *sólbjarta brúðr* 'the sun-bright bride'.
- 148 Perhaps emend to *vindkalda vegu* 'wind-cold ways'. Svipdagr refers back to his pseudonym *Vindkaldr* 'Wind Cold' in *Fj.* 6.
- 149 Possibly *við* should be added to the Old Norse line, to produce the literal sense 'speaks against'.
- 150 I.e., destiny, Urðr being one of the Nornir. Cf. *Urðar lokur* 'Urðr's locks(?)' in *Gg.* 7.
- 151 An understatement.
- 152 Some editors emend *ljúfu bergi* 'on (a/the) beloved rock' to *Lyfjabergi* 'on Lyfjaberg'; cf. *Fj.* 36.
- 153 Or 'half-days' (periods from dawn to dusk).
- 154 It is unclear whether this final stanza is spoken by Mengloð or Svipdagr.
- 155 I.e., our mutual desire has come to pass.
- 156 The verb *slíta* 'to tear (apart)' perhaps implies an intensely passionate consumption of their time together; cf. *Hlr.* 14.
- 157 I.e., 'this age of the world' or 'old age'.



Index

This page index is of Old Norse proper nouns in the translation only, excluding the notes thereto and the names of poems.

- Aðal 797
Afi 791
Agnarr (brother of Auða) 523
Agnarr (son of Geirrøðr) 173, 175, 187
Agnarr (son of Hrauðungr) 173
Ái (dwarf) 41, 753
Ái (husband of Edda) 789
Aldafqðr (alias of Óðinn) 141, 153
Alfaðir (alias of Óðinn) 397
Álfheimr 175
Álfhildr 415
Alfqðr (alias of Óðinn) 185
Álfr (dwarf) 41, 753
Álfraqðull (term for the sun) 153
Álfr (son of Hjálprekr) 459
Álfr (son of Hróðmarr) 425
Álfr (son of Hundingr) 391, 441
Álfr ('the elder', ancestor of Óttarr) 815
Álfr ('the Old', son of Dagr) 815
Álfr ('the Old', son of Hringr) 399
Álfr ('the Old', son of Úlfr) 813
Algøen 241
Áli 813
Allvaldi 243
Álmveig 813
Alsviðr 183
Alsvinnr 527
Alvíss 371, 373, 375, 377
Alvitr (name applied to Hervør) 351
Alþjófr 41, 753
Álf 415, 417
Ambátt 791
Amma 791, 793
Ámr 815
Án 41, 753
Ánarr 41
Andhrímnir 177
Andvarafors 483
Andvaranautr 485, 607
Andvari 483
Angantýr (rival of Óttarr) 811, 819
Angeyja 819
Angrboða 819
Áni 815
Arasteinn 391, 441
Arfi 797
Arinnefja 791
Arngrímr 815
Árvakr 183, 527
Ásabragr 221
Ása-Þórr (term for Þórr) 249
Ásgarðr 267, 333
Askr 41, 753
Ásmundr 185
Ásólfr 815
Áss (sg.) 175, 273, 293, 299, 331, 333, 505, 669, 789. *See also* Æsir (pl.)
Ásynjur 293, 299, 333, 523, 777, 813
Atla 819
Atli (son of Buðli) 545, 561, 579, 581, 585, 607, 619, 621, 633, 645, 649, 651, 663, 665, 667, 669, 671, 673, 685, 689, 693, 695, 697, 699, 701, 703, 705, 707, 719, 721, 733
Atli (son of Hringr) 399
Atli (son of Íðmundr) 415, 417, 419, 421, 423
Atríðr (alias of Óðinn) 185
Atvarðr 847
Auða 599. *See also* Hauða

- Auðlingar 813, 815
 Auðr ('the Deeply Rich') 817
 Aurbóða 817, 849
 Aurgelmir 147
 Aurglasir 847
 Aurvagar 41, 753
 Aurvangr 41, 753
 Austri 41, 753
- Báfurr 753
 Baldr 45, 51, 177, 297, 299, 577, 761, 777, 779, 817
 Báleygr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Bari 847
 Barn 797
 Barri (grove) 223
 Barri (relative of Óttarr) 815
 Bávorr 41
 Beli 51, 761
 Bera 691, 695. *See also* Kostbera
 Bergelmir 147, 149
 Bestla 113
 Beyla 291, 305
 Biflindi (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Bífur 753
 Bikki 585, 665, 719
 Bil 651
 Bíldr 753
 Bileygr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Billingr (dwarf) 753
 Billingr (giant?) 101
 Birløst 185, 505
 Bilskírnir 179
 Bívorr 41
 Björt 849
 Bláinn 753
 Blíð 849
 Blíðr 849
 Blindr (alias of Óðinn?) 437
 Boddi 793
 Bóndi 793
 Borghildr 389, 437, 459
 Borgný 645
 Borgundar 667
 Borr 751. *See also* Burr (father of Óðinn)
 Bragalundr 439
 Bragi 295
 Bragi (god) 185, 293, 295, 527
 Bragi (son of Högni, father of Sigrún) 441, 443
 Brálundr 389, 437
- Brámi 815
 Brandey 393
 Brattskeggr 793
 Brávöllr 397
 Breiðablik 177
 Breiðr 793
 Brimir (giant) 41, 47
 Brimir (sword) 185, 439, 445, 527
 Brísingar 333, 335
 Broddr 815
 Brúðr 793
 Brunavágar 437, 439
 Brúni 753
 Brynhildr 471, 475, 543, 545, 561, 563, 573, 575,
 577, 579, 599, 607, 619, 647, 649
 Buðli 389, 391, 401, 415, 421, 425, 427, 445, 449,
 471, 543, 545, 561, 575, 579, 585, 587, 599, 619,
 633, 691, 695, 697, 701, 703, 705
 Buðlungar 673
 Búi (relative of Óttarr) 815
 Búi (son of Karl) 793
 Bundinskeggi 793
 Búri 753
 Burr (father of Óðinn) 39, 817. *See also* Borr
 Burr (son of Jarl) 797
 Byggvir 291, 301, 303, 305
 Býleiptr/Býleistr (alias of Óðinn?) 49, 759, 819
 Bögvildr 351, 355, 357, 359
 Bólverkr (alias of Óðinn) 105, 185
 Bólþórr 113
 Bómburr 41
 Bómburr 753
- Dagr (ancestor of Óttarr) 815
 Dagr (in *dǫglingr* 'descendant of Dagr(?)'),
 ancestor of Helgi Hundingsbani and Sigurðr
 389, 391, 393, 439, 449, 559
 Dagr (personification of the day) 147, 523
 Dagr (son of Högni, father of Sigrún) 441,
 445, 447
 Dáinn (dwarf) 753, 811
 Dáinn (dwarf or elf?) 113
 Dáinn (stag) 181
 Danir 601, 619
 Danir (in a term for 'giants') 269
 Danmrk 459, 563, 617
 Danpr 663, 799
 Danr 799
 Dellingr 117, 147, 847
 Digraldi 791

- Dólgþrasir 41, 753
 Dóri 847
 Drafnir 753
 Draupnir 41
 Drengr 793
 Drumba 791
 Drumbr 791
 Drøttr 791
 Duneyrr 181
 Duraþróðr 181
 Durinn 41, 753
 Dvalinn (dwarf) 41, 373, 505, 753
 Dvalinn (stag) 181
 Edda 789
 Eggþér 47, 757
 Egill (brother of Völundr) 351
 Egill (giant?) 267
 Eikin 181
 Eikinskjaldi 41, 753
 Eikintjasna 791
 Eikþyrnir 179
 Eir 847, 849
 Eistla 819
 Eitill 607, 671, 733
 Eldhrímnir 177
 Eldir 291
 Élivágar 149, 267
 Embla 41, 753
 Erna 797
 Erpr (son of Atli) 607, 671, 733
 Erpr (son of Jónakr) 719, 735, 737
 Eyfura 815
 Eyjólfur 391, 441
 Eylimi 417, 423, 425, 459, 465, 467, 487, 815
 Eymóðr 619
 Eymundr 813
 Eyrgjafa 819
 Faðir 793
 Fáfnir 467, 485, 487, 489, 503, 505, 507, 509, 511,
 513, 557, 601, 607, 647, 815
 Falhófnir 181
 Farmatýr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Feima 793
 Fengr (alias of Óðinn) 487
 Fenrir 47, 151, 153, 301, 397, 755
 Fenrisúlfr 291
 Fensalir 45
 Fíf 617
 Fíli 41, 753
 Fimafengr 291
 Fimbultýr (alias of Óðinn?) 761
 Fimbulvetr 151
 Fimbulþulr (alias of Óðinn?) 97, 113
 Fimbulþul (river) 181
 Finnar 351
 Finnur 41
 Fitjungr 97
 Fjalarr (cockerel) 47, 757
 Fjalarr (dwarf) 41
 Fjalarr (giant?) 245
 Fjósnir 791
 Fjölkaldr 841
 Fjölnir (alias of Óðinn) 185, 487
 Fjölsviðr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Fjölsviðr (giant?) 841, 843, 845, 847, 849
 Fjölsvinnr (variant form of Fjölsviðr) 841
 Fjölvarr 241
 Fjörgyn 51, 249, 761
 Fjörgynn 297
 Fjörm 181
 Fjörnir 665
 Fjörsungar 443
 Fjöturlundr 445
 Fljóð 793
 Fólkvangr 177
 Fornbogi 753
 Forseti 177
 Fraðmarr 815
 Frakkland 459, 523
 Fránangrsfors 309
 Fránmarr 415, 417
 Frár 41
 Frekasteinn 397, 399, 425, 441, 443
 Freki (name of two sons of Dagr) 815
 Freki (wolf) 179
 Freyja 177, 291, 299, 331, 333, 335, 337, 647, 811
 Freyr 175, 185, 213, 215, 217, 221, 223, 291, 301,
 303, 577, 817
 Fríð 849
 Frigg 45, 51, 141, 173, 291, 297, 299, 647, 761
 Frjaut 813
 Fróði (grandfather of Óttarr) 813, 815
 Fróði (king) 391
 Frór 753
 Frosti 41
 Fræg 753
 Frægr 41

- Fulla 173
 Fúlnir 791
 Fundinn 41, 753
 Gagnráðr (alias of Óðinn) 143, 145
 Gandálfur 41, 753
 Gangleri (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Garmr 49, 51, 185, 757, 759, 761
 Gastropnir 843
 Gautr (alias of Óðinn) 187, 777, 779
 Gefjun 295, 297
 Gefn 513
 Geirmundr 651
 Geirþul 183
 Geirrøðr 173, 175, 185, 187
 Geirkögul 45
 Geirvimal 181
 Geitir 465
 Gerðr 215, 217, 219, 221, 223, 817
 Geri (dog) 843
 Geri (wolf) 179
 Gífr 843
 Gimlé 53, 763
 Ginnarr 41
 Gipul 181
 Gísl 181
 Gjaflaug 557
 Gjallarhorn 49, 759
 Gjálp 819
 Gjöll 181
 Gjúki (father of Gunnarr) 467, 471, 473, 475, 513, 543, 545, 547, 557, 559, 561, 573, 579, 599, 601, 615, 623, 633, 645, 649, 663, 685, 695, 707, 721, 733, 737, 817
 Gjúki (son of Hogni) 607
 Gjúkungar 579, 607
 Glaðr 181
 Glaðsheimr 175
 Glapsviðr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Glasilundr 415
 Glaumvør 607, 685, 689, 691
 Gler 181
 Glitnir 177
 Glói 41
 Glóinn 753
 Gniphellir 49, 51, 759, 761
 Gnopalundr 395, 397, 399
 Gnitaheiðr 467, 487, 503, 663
 Gnúphellir 757, 759
 Goðþjóð 599, 721, 723
 Góinn 183
 Gotar 175, 471, 543, 667, 719, 733, 737, 739
 Gothormr 543, 615. *See also* Guthormr
 Grábakr 183
 Gráð 181
 Grafvitnir 183
 Grafvölluðr 183
 Gramr 487, 509, 523, 577
 Grani 353, 397, 465, 467, 483, 513, 527, 561, 579, 601, 615, 649
 Granmarr 393, 397, 439, 441, 443, 445
 Greip 819
 Grímildr (also spelt Grímhildr) 471, 475, 617, 619, 621, 647, 699, 701, 703
 Grímnir (alias of Óðinn) 173, 175, 185
 Grímr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Grímr ('Plough-Scraper') 815
 Grípir 465, 467, 469, 471, 473, 475
 Gróa 837
 Guðmundr 395, 439, 441, 443, 445
 Guðrún 471, 475, 543, 545, 547, 557, 559, 561, 563, 573, 577, 583, 585, 601, 607, 615, 617, 619, 623, 633, 635, 649, 663, 669, 671, 693, 697, 699, 703, 707, 719, 721, 723, 733, 735, 817
 Gullinkambi 47, 757
 Gullnir 397
 Gullrond 559, 561
 Gulltoppr 181
 Gullveig 43, 755
 Gunnir 527
 Gunnarr ('Baulk') 815
 Gunnarr (son of Gjúki) 471, 473, 475, 545, 561, 573, 575, 579, 581, 583, 607, 615, 617, 621, 633, 645, 647, 649, 651, 663, 665, 667, 669, 673, 685, 689, 691, 697, 699, 719, 723, 733, 817
 Gunnloð 83, 103
 Gunnr 45, 439
 Gunnþorin 181
 Gunnþró 181
 Gustr 483
 Guthormr 475, 577, 817. *See also* Gothormr
 Gyllir 181
 Gymir 213, 215, 217, 219, 291, 301, 817
 Gyrðr 815
 Góll 183
 Gómul 181
 Góndlir (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Góndul 45
 Gópul 181

- Hábrók 185
 Haddingjar 619, 815
 Hagall 437
 Haki 817
 Hákon 563, 617
 Hálfdan (father of Kára) 451
 Hálfdan ('highest of the Skjöldungar') 813
 Hálfr 617
 Halr 793
 Hamall 437, 439
 Hamðir 719, 721, 733, 737, 739
 Hámundr 459
 Hánarr 41, 753
 Haraldr ('War-Tooth') 817
 Hár (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Hárbarðr (alias of Óðinn) 185, 239, 241, 243, 245, 247, 249, 251
 Hár (dwarf) 41, 753
 Hárr (alias of Óðinn) 43, 755
 Hatafjorðr 419
 Hati (giant) 419, 421
 Hati (wolf) 183
 Hátún 389, 393
 Hauða 523. *See also* Auða
 Haugspori 41, 753
 Hauldr 793
 Hávarðr 391
 Hávi (alias of Óðinn) 81, 105, 119
 Heðinn 415, 423, 425
 Heðinsey 393
 Hefti 753
 Heiðdraupnir 527
 Heiðr (daughter of Hrímnr) 817
 Heiðrekr 645
 Heiðr (sorceress) 43, 757
 Heiðrún 179, 821
 Heimdallr 39, 45, 49, 177, 303, 333, 751, 755, 759, 789
 Heimir 469, 471, 473
 Helblindi (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Helgi (Haddingjaskaði) 451
 Helgi (Hjörvarðsson) 415, 417, 419, 421, 423, 425, 427, 437
 Helgi (Hundingsbani) 389, 393, 395, 399, 437, 439, 441, 443, 445, 447, 449, 451, 459
 Helgi (identity uncertain) 467
 Hel (name of Underworld and its female ruler) 47, 49, 151, 181, 219, 245, 307, 373, 375, 377, 423, 483, 505, 507, 511, 557, 599, 671, 693, 695, 705, 723, 757, 759, 777, 837, 845
 Hepti 41
 Herborg 557
 Herfjötur 183
 Herföðr (alias of Óðinn) 45
 Herfaföðr (alias of Óðinn) 47, 141, 179, 757, 811
 Herjan (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Herjann (alias of Óðinn) 45, 561
 Herkja 633, 635
 Hermóðr 811
 Hersir 797
 Herteitr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Hervarðr 441
 Hervør (Alvitr) 351, 353
 Hildi 183
 Hildigunn 813
 Hildisvíni 811
 Hildólfr 239
 Hildr 45, 443
 Hildr ('under helm', a name of Brynhildr) 599
 Himinbjörg 177
 Himinfjöll 389
 Himinvangar 389, 391
 Hindarfjall 513, 523
 Hjalli 667, 697
 Hjálberi (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Hjálm-Gunnarr 523, 599
 Hjálprekr 459, 483, 487, 489
 Hjordís 459, 465, 815
 Hjörleifr 393
 Hjörvarðr (father of Helgi Hjörvarðsson) 415, 417, 419, 423, 425, 427
 Hjörvarðr (father of Hvæðna) 817
 Hjörvarðr (son of Hundingr) 391, 441
 Hlaðguðr (Svanhvít) 351, 353
 Hlébarðr 243
 Hlébjörg 443
 Hlédís 813
 Hlésey 247, 439, 651
 Hlévangr 41
 Hlévargr 753
 Hliðskjálf 173, 213
 Hlíf 849
 Hlífpursa 849
 Hlín 51, 761
 Hlódyn 51
 Hlórriði (alias of Pórr) 267, 269, 271, 273, 305, 331, 333, 337
 Hlóðvarðr 421
 Hlóðvér 351, 353, 619

- Hlókk 183
 Hlymdalir 599
Hniflungar 399, 721. *See also Niflungar*
Hniflungr 703
Hnikarr (alias of Óðinn) 185, 487, 489
Hníkuðr (alias of Óðinn) 185
Horn 837
Hornbori 41
Hoddmímir 151
Hoddrofnir 527
Hrauðungr (father of Geirrøðr) 173
Hrauðungr (father of Hjordís) 815
Hreiðgotar 143
Hreiðmarr 483, 485
Hreimr 791
Hríð 181
Hrímfaxi 143
Hrímerðr 419, 421, 423
Hrímgrímnir 221
Hrímnir 219, 817
Hringr 399
Hringstaðir 389, 401
Hringstöð 389
Hrist 183
Hróðmarr 417, 419, 425
Hróðr 269
Hróðrglöð(?) 737
Hróðrsvitnir 301
Hróðvitnir 183
Hrólfr ('the Old') 815
Hrollaugr 443
Hroptatýr (alias of Óðinn) 187
Hroptr (alias of Óðinn) 51, 113, 175, 303, 527, 761
Hrossþjófr 817
Hrotti 513
Hrungnir 241, 269, 307
Hræsvelgr 149
Hrœrekkr ('Ring-Slinger') 817
Hrønn 181
Hrymr 49, 759
Huginn 179, 399, 487, 489, 511, 621
Humlungr 415
Hún 719
Húnaland 557, 645
Húnar 617, 663, 665, 667, 669, 671
Hundingr 391, 399, 437, 439, 441, 447, 459, 467, 487, 489. *See also Hundingsbani* (title of Helgi, son of Sigmundr)
- Hundingsbani (title of Helgi, son of Sigmundr) 389, 437
Hundland 437
Húnmrök 665
Hveðrungr (alias of Loki) 51
Hveralundr 47
Hvergelmir 179
Hvæðna 817
Hymir 267, 269, 271, 273, 275, 299, 373
Hymlingr 415
Hyndla 811
Hoëmingr 437
Hœnir 43, 53, 483, 755, 763
Hǫðbroddr 389, 393, 395, 399, 439, 441, 443
Hǫðr 45, 51, 761, 777, 779
Hogni (father of Sigrún) 391, 399, 401, 437, 439, 441, 443, 445, 449, 451
Hogni (son of Gjúki) 473, 475, 543, 575, 581, 607, 615, 617, 621, 633, 645, 649, 663, 665, 667, 669, 685, 687, 691, 693, 697, 699, 703, 719, 733, 817
Höll 181
Hörvir 815
Hösvir 791
Iðavöllr 39, 51, 751, 761
Iðmundr 415
Iðunn 291, 295
Ífing 145
Ímðr 819
Ímr 141
Ingunar-Freyr (title of Freyr) 301
Innsteinn 811, 813
Íri 847
Ísólfur 815
Ísungr 393
Ívaldi 185
Ívarr 817
Jafnhár (alias of Óðinn) 185
Jákr (alias of Óðinn) 185, 187
Jari 41, 753
Jarizkárr 619
Jarizleifr 619
Jarl 795, 797
Járnsaxa 819
Járnviðr 47, 755
Jöð 797
Jónakr 585, 719, 721, 737
Jorð 305, 331

- Jörmungandr 759
 Jörmunrekkr 585, 719, 733, 735, 737, 815
 Jörvellir 41, 753
 Jösurmarr 815
 Jötunheimar (pl.) 39, 213, 215, 223, 331, 333, 335, 337, 751. *See also* Jötunheimr (sg.)
 Jötunheimr (sg.) 49, 759. *See also* Jötunheimar (pl.)
 Kára 451
 Kári 815
 Karl 793
 Kefsir 791
 Kerlaugar 181
 Ketill 815
 Kíli 41, 753
 Kjalarr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Kjárr 351, 353, 663
 Kleggi 791
 Klúrr 791
 Klyppr 815
 Knéfrøðr 607, 663
 Kólga 395
 Konr 797, 799
 Kostbera 607, 685, 687. *See also* Bera
 Kumbla 791
 Kundr 797
 Kørmt 181
 Langbarðr 619
 Laufey 305, 333, 335
 Leggjaldi 791
 Leifnir 839
 Leiptr 181, 445
 Leirbrimir 843
 Léttfeti 181
 Liðskjálfr 847
 Líf 151
 Lífþrasir 151
 Limi 685
 Litr 41, 753
 Loddáfñir 105, 107, 109, 111
 Loðinn 421
 Lóðurr 43, 755
 Lofarr 41, 753
 Lofnheiðr 485
 Logafjoll 391, 441
 Loki 47, 273, 291, 293, 295, 297, 299, 301, 303, 305, 307, 309, 331, 333, 335, 483, 485, 759, 779, 819
 Loki (dwarf? possibly a mistake) 847
 Lóni 41, 753
 Loptr (alias of Loki) 293, 295, 819, 845
 Lútr 791
 Lyfjaberg 847
 Lyngheiðr 485
 Lyngvi 489
 Lýr 847
 Læraðr 179
 Lævateinn 845
 Magni 153, 239, 249
 Máni (personification of the moon) 39, 145, 147, 751
 Meili 239
 Mélnir 399
 Menglǫð 837, 841, 849
 Menja 583
 Miðgarðr 39, 51, 183, 243, 751, 761, 813
 Miðgarðsormr 267
 Miðviðnir 187
 Mímameiðr 845
 Mími 845
 Mímir 45, 391, 839
 Mímr 49, 527, 759
 Mist 183, 399
 Mjöðvitnir 41, 753
 Mjöllnir 153, 273, 305, 307, 337
 Móði 153, 273
 Móðir 793, 795
 Móðsognir 753. *See also* Mótsognir
 Móinn 183
 Móinsheimar 397, 445
 Mornaland 645
 Mótsognir 41. *See also* Móðsognir
 Munarheimr 415, 427
 Mundilfæri 147
 Muninn 179
 Muspell 49, 301, 759
 Mýlnir 399
 Myrkheimr 673
 Myrkviðr 301, 351, 399, 663, 665
 Mogr 797
 Mogþrasir 153
 Nabbi 811
 Naglfar 49, 759
 Náinn 753
 Náli 41, 753
 Nanna 815
 Nár 41, 753

- Narfi 309
 Nari 309
 Nástrandir 757
 Náströnd 47
 Nauðr 525
 Neri 389
 Niðafjöll 53, 763
 Niðavellir 47
 Niðhoggr 47, 53, 181, 183, 757, 763
 Niði 41, 753
 Niðjungr 797
 Niðr 797
 Níðuðr 351, 353, 355, 357, 359
 Niflhel 151, 777
 Niflungar 545, 607, 665, 667, 669, 693, 695
 Niflungr 667
 Nípingr 753
 Njárar 353, 357
 Njörðr 149, 177, 185, 213, 221, 223, 291, 299,
 301, 335, 721, 845
 Nóatún 177, 335
 Norðri 41, 753
 Nóregr 423
 Nóri 41, 753
 Norn (sg.) 483, 527. *See also* Nornir (pl.)
 Nornir (pl.) 389, 443, 505, 513, 573, 623, 667,
 721, 737, 739. *See also* Norn (sg.)
 Nýi 41, 753
 Nýr 753
 Nýráðr 41, 753
 Nyt 181
 Nønn 181
 Nøkkvi 815
 Nørr 147, 377
 Nøt 181
 Nött (personification of the night) 147, 523
 Oddrún 585, 607, 645, 647, 651
 Óðinn 43, 45, 51, 101, 105, 113, 141, 143, 145,
 147, 149, 151, 153, 155, 173, 175, 177, 179,
 185, 187, 217, 221, 239, 243, 249, 271, 273, 291,
 293, 297, 335, 337, 391, 445, 447, 449, 451, 483,
 485, 523, 599, 755, 757, 759, 761, 777, 779, 819
 Óðr 43, 755
 Óðrerir 103
 Ófnir 183, 187
 Ógn 393, 513
 Óinn 483
 Ókólnir 47
 Ómi (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Ómi (relative of Óttarr) 815
 Ónarr 753
 Óri 847
 Orkningr 691
 Óski (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Óskópnir 505
 Otr 483, 485
 Óttarr ('the Foolish') 811, 813, 815, 817, 821
 Ráðbarðr 817
 Ráðgríð 183
 Ráðseyjarsund 239
 Ráðsviðr 41, 753
 Rán 395, 419, 483
 Randgríð 183
 Randvér (son of Jörmunrekkr) 719
 Randvér (son of Ráðbarðr) 817
 Rani 837
 Ratatoskr 181
 Rati 103
 Reginleif 183
 Reginn 41, 467, 483, 485, 487, 489, 503, 507,
 509, 511, 753
 Reifnir 815
 Rennandi 181
 Riðill 509
 Ríg-Jarl 797
 Rígr 789, 791, 793, 795, 797
 Rín 181, 353, 487, 545, 575, 667, 669
 Rindr 779, 837
 Ristill 793
 Rógheimr 427
 Ruðr 837
 Rungnir 527
 Rævill 487
 Røðulsfjöll 427
 Røðulsvellir 417
 Saðr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Sága 175, 397
 Salarsteinn 41, 753
 Salgofnir 451
 Sámsey 297
 Sanngötall 185
 Saxi 633
 Seggr 793
 Sevafjöll 441, 447, 449, 451
 Siðr 181
 Siðgrani (alias of Óðinn) 371
 Siðhottr (alias of Óðinn) 185

- Síðskeggr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Sif 249, 267, 269, 273, 291, 305, 335
 Sigarr (brother of Högni, Sigrún's father) 437
 Sigarr (likely relative of Siggeirr) 617
 Sigarr (messenger of Helgi Hjorvarðsson) 425
 Sigarshólmr 417
 Sigarsvellir 389, 425
 Sigfaðir (alias of Óðinn) 51, 305
 Sigfǫðr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Siggeir 397
 Siggeirr 617
 Sigmundr (likely son of Sigurðr) 621
 Sigmundr (son of Völsungr) 389, 437, 439, 441, 451, 459, 465, 487, 489, 503, 523, 581, 617, 811
 Sigdrífa 513, 523
 Sigrlinn 415, 417, 425
 Sigrún 395, 399, 437, 439, 441, 443, 445, 447, 449, 451
 Sigtryggr 813
 Sigtýr (alias of Óðinn) 669
 Sigurðr 459, 465, 467, 469, 471, 473, 475, 483, 487, 489, 503, 505, 507, 509, 511, 513, 523, 543, 545, 547, 557, 559, 561, 563, 573, 575, 577, 585, 587, 599, 601, 607, 615, 617, 621, 649, 705, 719, 721, 723, 733, 815
 Sigyn 47, 309, 757
 Silfrintoppr 181
 Sindri 47
 Sinfjötli 389, 395, 397, 441, 445, 459
 Sinir 181
 Sinnara 845, 847
 Sinrjóð 415
 Skáði 177, 213, 291, 303, 309, 817
 Skáfiðr 41, 753
 Skatalundr 601
 Skeggjöld 183
 Skeiðbrimir 181
 Skekkill 815
 Skíðblaðnir 185
 Skilfingar 813
 Skilfingr (alias of Óðinn) 187
 Skinfaxi 143
 Skirfir 753
 Skírnir 213, 215, 217, 219, 221, 223
 Skirvir 41
 Skjöldungar (pl.) 443, 451, 513, 545, 685, 813.
See also Skjöldungr (sg.)
 Skjöldungr (sg.) 443. *See also* Skjöldungar (pl.)
 Skrýmir 307
 Skuld (Norn) 43, 755, 837
 Skuld (valkyrie) 45
 Skúrhildr 815
 Skögul 45, 183, 581
 Skóll 183
 Slagfiðr 351
 Sleipnir 185, 527, 777, 819
 Slíð 181
 Slíðr 47
 Smiðr 793
 Snót 793
 Snaefjöll 389
 Snævarr 607, 691
 Snor 793
 Sogn 399
 Sólarr 607, 691
 Sólbjartar 851
 Sólblindi 843
 Sólþjöll 389
 Sólheimar 399
 Sól (personification of the sun) 39, 145, 147, 151, 183, 751
 Sonr 797
 Sparinsheiðr 399
 Sporvitnir 399
 Sprakki 793
 Sprund 793
 Stafnsnes 393
 Starkaðr 439, 443
 Strond 181
 Styrkleifar 443
 Suðri 41, 753
 Sumar (personification of summer) 147
 Surtr 49, 51, 145, 505, 759, 761, 845
 Suttungi 221
 Suttungr 377
 Svaðilfari 819
 Sváfnir (alias of Óðinn) 187
 Sváfnir (father of Sigrlinn) 415, 417
 Sváfnir (snake) 183
 Svafrþorinn 841
 Svanhildr 583, 585, 607, 719, 721, 723, 733
 Svanhvít (name applied to Hlaðguðr) 351
 Svanni 793
 Svanr ('the Red') 813
 Svárangr 245
 Svarinshaugr 395, 439
 Svarri 793
 Svarthofði 817
 Svásuðr 147

- Svávaland 417
 Sváva (mother of Hildigunn) 813
 Sváva (valkyrie) 417, 419, 423, 425, 427
 Sveggjuðr 399
 Sveinn 797
 Sviðr 753
 Sviðrir (alias of Óðinn) 187
 Sviðurr (alias of Óðinn) 187
 Svipall (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Svipdagr 849, 851
 Svipuðr 399
 Svífurr 41
 Svol (river) 181
 Svol (shield) 183
 Sylgr 181
 Sæfari 813
 Sæhrímnir 177
 Sækunngr 813
 Sæmorn 417
 Særeiðr 415
 Sævarstaðr 355
 Sœkin 181
 Sókkmímir 187
 Sókkvabekkr 175
 Sørli 719, 733, 737, 739
 Tindr 815
 Tótrughypja 791
 Trønubeina 791
 Trønueyrr 393
 Týr 267, 273, 291, 301, 525
 Tyrfingr 815
 Uðr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Úlfdalir 351, 353
 Úlfr (father of Álfr the Old) 813
 Úlfr ('the Gaping') 815
 Ulfrún 819
 Úlfssjár 351
 Ullr 175, 185, 669
 Unavágur 395
 Uni 847
 Unnr 445
 Urðr 43, 105, 755, 837, 851
 Úri 847
 Vaðgelmir 483
 Váfþðr (alias of Óðinn) 751
 Váfuðr (alias of Óðinn) 187
 Vafþrúðnir 141, 143, 145, 147, 149, 151, 153, 155
 Vakr (alias of Óðinn) 187
 Válaskjálf 175
 Valbjørg 621
 Valdarr 619
 Valfþðr (alias of Óðinn) 39, 45, 185, 755
 Valgrind 179
 Valhöll 45, 175, 179, 447, 811
 Valir 587, 811
 Váli (son of Loki?) 757
 Váli (son of Óðinn) 153, 779, 817
 Valland 243, 351, 599
 Valtamr 777
 Ván 181
 Vanaheimr 151
 Vandilsvé 447
 Vanangi 221
 Vanir 43, 151, 217, 333, 373, 375, 377, 527, 757
 Vár 337, 599
 Varinn 421
 Varinsey 397
 Varinsfjørðr 393
 Várkaldr 841
 Varr 847
 Veðrglasir 845
 Vegdrasill 847
 Veggr 753
 Vegsvinn 181
 Vegtamr (alias of Óðinn) 777, 779
 Véi 297
 Veigr 41
 Veratýr (alias of Óðinn) 175
 Verðandi 43, 755
 Verland 249
 Vestri 41, 753
 Vetr (personification of winter) 147
 Véurr (alias of Þórr) 269, 271
 Víð 181
 Víðarr 51, 153, 177, 291, 293, 761
 Viðófnir 843, 845, 847
 Viðólfr 817
 Viðrir (alias of Óðinn) 297, 391
 Viðurr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Víf 793
 Vígblær 447
 Vígðalir 447
 Vígríðr 145
 Vili 297
 Víli 41
 Vilmeiðr 817

- Vilmundr 645
 Vín 181
 Vínbjörg 621
 Vindálfr 41, 753
 Vindkaldr (alias of Svipdagr) 841
 Windsvalr 147
 Vingi 607, 685, 691, 693
 Vingskornir 513
 Vingþórr (title of Þórr) 331, 371
 Virvir 41, 753
 Vitr 41, 753
 Völsungar 389, 399, 437, 441
 Völsungr (father of Sigmundr) 437, 459, 815
 Völsungr (Sigurðr) 575
 Völsungr ('young', Sigurðr) 573
 Völsungr ('young', Völsungr or Sigurðr) 487
 Völundr 351, 353, 355, 357, 359
 Vönd 181
 Ýdalir 175
 Yggdrasill 43, 181, 183, 185, 755, 759
 Yggjungr (alias of Óðinn) 45
 Yggr (alias of Óðinn) 141, 187, 267, 513
 Ylfingar 389, 395, 399, 437, 439, 449, 813
 Ylgr 181
 Ymir 39, 145, 147, 183, 751, 817
 Ynglingar 813
 Yngvi (alias of Freyr) 401, 487
 Yngvi (dwarf) 41, 753
 Yngvi (son of Hringr) 399
 Ysja 791
 Þakkráðr 359
 Pegr 793
 Þekkr (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Þekkr (dwarf) 41
 Þír 791
 Þjálfí 247
 Þjazi 177, 243, 303, 817
 Þjóðmarr 633
 Þjóðnuma 181
 Þjóðrekr 607, 633
 Þjóðreyrir 117
 Þjóðvarta 849
 Þjóðvitnir 179
 Pöll 181
 Polley 421
 Þóra (daughter of Hákon) 563, 617
 Þóra ('Mother of Heroes') 815
 Porinn 41, 753
 Þórir ('Iron-Shield') 815
 Þórr 45, 175, 181, 239, 241, 243, 245, 247, 249, 251, 267, 271, 291, 305, 307, 331, 333, 335, 755, 811
 Þórsnes 397
 Præll 789, 791
 Þráinn 41, 753
 Prár 753
 Priði (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Prór (alias of Óðinn) 185
 Prór (dwarf) 41, 753
 Þrúðgelmir 147
 Prúðheimr 175
 Þrúði 183
 Þrymgjöll 843
 Þrymheimr 177
 Prymr 331, 333, 335, 337
 Pund 179
 Þundr (alias of Óðinn) 113, 185, 187
 Þyn 181
 Ægir 185, 267, 275, 291, 293, 295, 297, 307, 395
 Æsir (pl.) 39, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 51, 113, 117, 147, 149, 153, 175, 181, 183, 185, 213, 217, 221, 243, 267, 291, 293, 295, 297, 299, 301, 305, 307, 309, 331, 333, 373, 375, 483, 485, 505, 523, 751, 753, 757, 759, 761, 777, 789, 817, 847. *See also* Áss (sg.)
 Olmóðr 815
 Qlrún 351, 353
 Qrvasund 393
 Qrmr 181
 Økkvinkálfa 791

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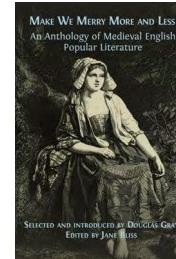
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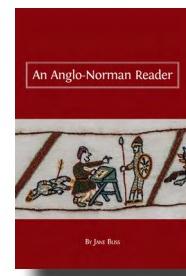


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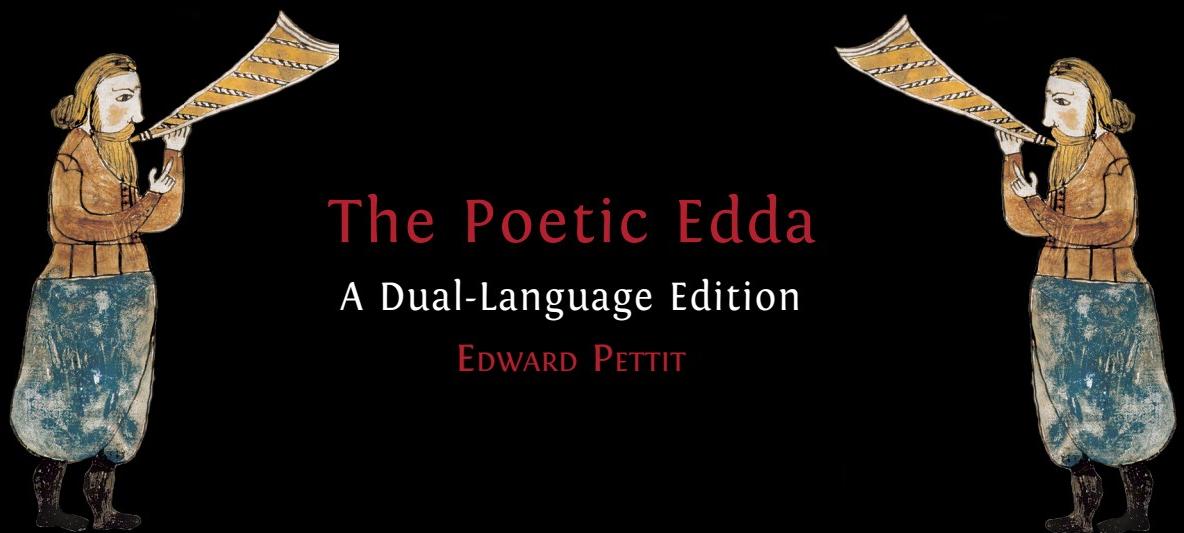
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Each poem is provided with an introduction, synopsis and suggestions for further reading. The Old Norse texts are furnished with a textual apparatus recording the manuscript readings behind this edition's emendations, as well as select variant readings. The accompanying translations, informed by the latest scholarship, are concisely annotated to make them as accessible as possible.

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